GIRLS ALOUD CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF SMASH HITS

RETROPOP

Alison Goldfrapp

Electronic excellence from her solo debut

V V Brown

Socially conscious star enters a bold new era

EUROVISION SONG CONTEST

Hello Europe, this is Liverpool calling!

Dannii Minogue

Neon Nights 20 and new music

'There's something coming very soon...'

JUNE 2023

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PETER COX
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Revisiting her early classics

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THE OFFICIAL **TAKE THAT** MUSICAL

FROM THE WRITER OF
CALENDAR GIRLS

GREATEST DAYS

NEVER FORGET

ONLY IN CINEMAS
JUNE 16

RETROPOP
ISSUE 16 | JUNE 2023

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HEY THERE!

I can't believe that it's taken *this* long to get a Minogue on the cover of RETROPOP, but I couldn't be more thrilled to be celebrating 20 years of Dannii's phenomenal 'Neon Nights' this month!

When it comes to classic dance pop records, her fourth album stands out not only as a highlight from the Aussie sisters' shared catalogue, but also one that would shape the landscape of the charts through the noughties and beyond.

I'd go so far as to say that without 'Neon Nights' we wouldn't have 'Confessions On A Dance Floor', so when London Records told me about their brilliant plans to mark its latest anniversary I knew we *had* to go all in and it was an absolute pleasure to chat with the Queen of the Clubs about the iconic era and plenty more besides.

Based on the response I've seen from fans around the world on social media, the love for 'Neon Nights' is still going strong and I hope the success of this reissue leads to a full-blown Dannii renaissance - but more on that on p. 36...

There's so much happening this month that fitting everything into one issue was a struggle, so whether it's the latest on Eurovision and Liverpool 2023 - including a *dream* interview with returning champ Loreen - or our 20-year album-by-album celebration of Girls Aloud's brilliant catalogue, there's plenty to whet your appetite and then some...

As always, we've got a bunch of exclusives lined up for you, including interviews with ABC's Martin Fry, singer-songwriter V V Brown, Go West's Peter Cox, and BRIT-winner Beverley Craven, plus a deep dive into the truly excellent solo debut from Alison Goldfrapp by the artist herself - and even a catch-up with Lolly!

Plus, it's a bumper reviews section this month with new music from Belinda Carlisle, Simply Red and Sparks, along with reissues of classics from the likes of ABBA, Britney Spears, Rick Astley, and lots more.

With that, I'm going to let you dive in and enjoy the issue - take care, and I'll see you again in four weeks' time!

Connor

Connor Gotto, Editor

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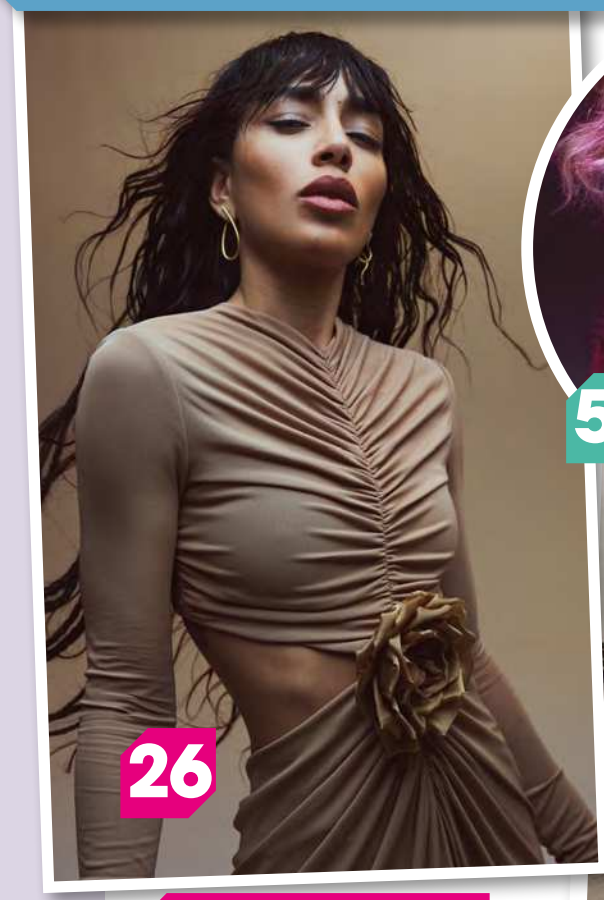

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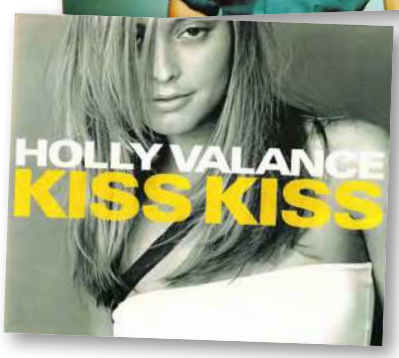

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LINE-UP NEWS

S CLUB HONOUR 'SWEETEST SOUL' PAUL CATTERMOLE

S Club 7 have paid tribute to their late bandmate Paul Cattermole following his sudden death at the age of 46.

The singer was found dead at his home on April 6, with a statement from his family confirming there were "no suspicious circumstances" surrounding his passing.

Announcing the devastating news, the band said: "We are truly devastated by the passing of our brother Paul. There are no words to describe the deep sadness and loss we all feel. We were so lucky to have had him in our lives and are thankful for the amazing memories we have.

"He will be so deeply missed by each and every one of us. We ask that you respect the privacy of his family and of the band at this time."

In a series of posts on their personal pages, the group went on to share their memories of the singer, with Jo O'Meara remembering Paul as the "sweetest soul".

"This has been utterly devastating, and I am totally shocked and heartbroken," she penned. "We have lost someone so incredibly special to us all , and there is a huge sense of sadness that will never go."

Tina Barrett shared a poem in his honour, remembering Paul as "a shining star, full of character and life," and Bradley McIntosh added he will "always be with us in our hearts". Meanwhile Rachel Stevens called him "a kind, gentle and sensitive soul with the most incredible energy and such a wild free spirit".

"He would light up any room," she added. "We are heartbroken but so grateful for the memories we all shared. An absolute shining star who we will love and miss always."

Speaking through tears, Hannah Spearritt, who dated Paul for seven years and had recently made amends following their split to rejoin the group for a 25th anniversary tour this autumn, admitted her devastation in an interview with The Sun on Sunday.

"It's still so raw and I have these moments where I don't quite believe that it's real. I still can't believe I will never see him again," she shared. "It's all the more tragic because he was looking forward to the tour the most out of all of us. He just wanted to have fun and enjoy it."

Plans are still in place for the band to tour later this year, with the shows expected to celebrate Paul and his legacy with S Club.

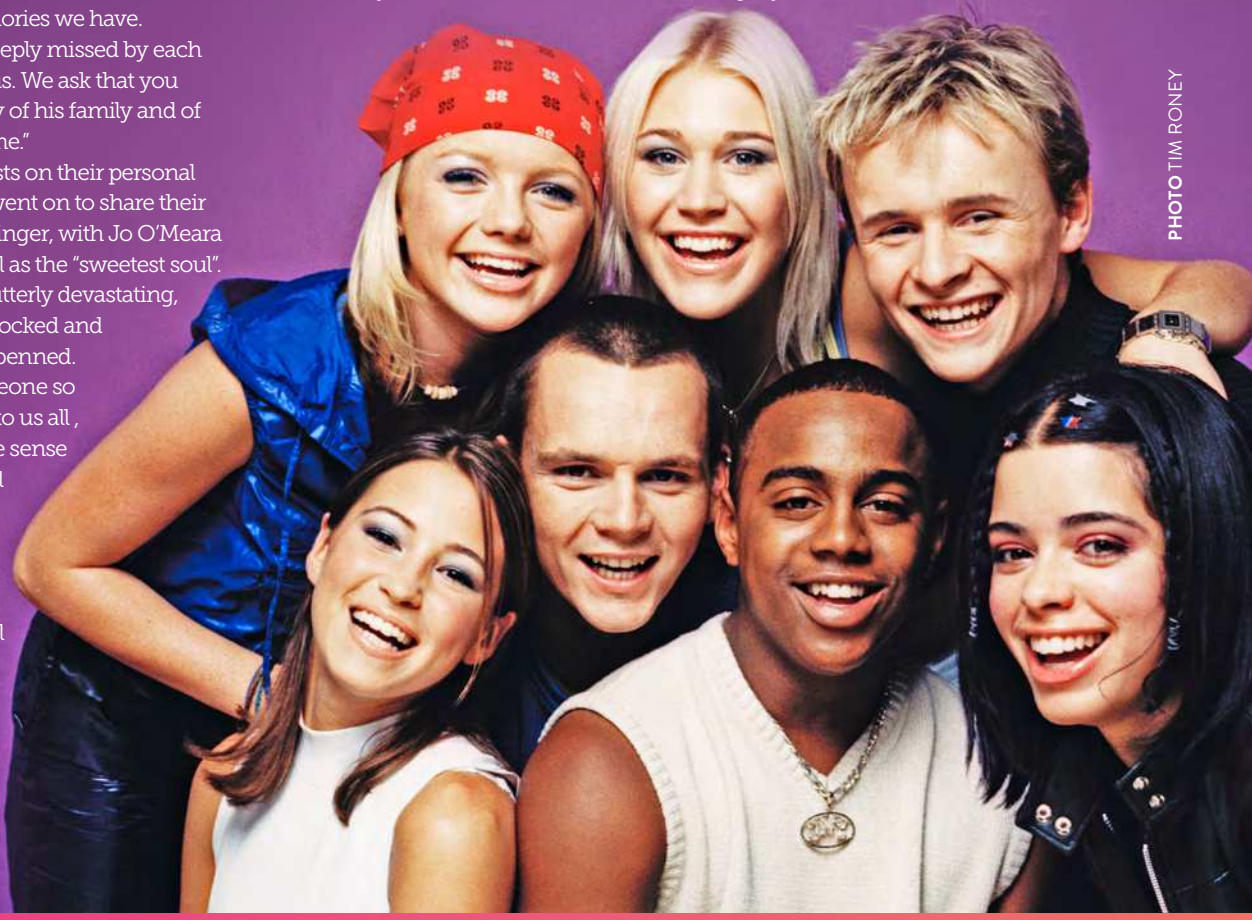


PHOTO TIM RONEY

IN THE LOOP

DEXYS will release their fifth album 'The Feminine Divine' on July 28, followed by a UK & Ireland Tour this autumn

THE SCRIPT guitarist **MARK SHEEHAN** has died aged 46

PAUL SIMON will release 'Seven Psalms' - his first album in seven years - this spring

CHERYL 'doesn't know' if she'll return to music following her successful West End stint in '2:22: A Ghost Story'

Britney's 'brutally honest' memoir

PHOTO RANDEE ST. NICHOLAS

Britney Spears has reportedly finished work on her much-anticipated tell-all memoir.

The pop superstar has been hard at work on the tome and, according to sources, she's set to drop the "inspiring" and a "groundbreaking instant best-seller" later this year.

"Britney's book is a story of triumph. It will cover her most vulnerable moments, her childhood – being a little girl with big dreams – her breakup with Justin Timberlake, the moment she shaved her head, and her battle with her family over her conservatorship," said one source (via Page Six)

"It is also a story of survival, finding her way out of the crippling conservatorship to finding happiness with her husband Sam Ashgari."

According to the publication, the *Toxic* star has been working with ghostwriter Sam Lansky, who has written for The Atlantic, New York Magazine, Time and has profiled Madonna, Nicki Minaj and Adele, among others.

Publisher Simon & Schuster is planning a release ahead of the holidays, with insiders adding: "Britney's book is brutally honest and from the heart. No stone is left unturned. It's truly a female empowerment story – her taking control of her life."

A second publishing source added: "This book is a gift... There are parts of this book that every person — particularly every woman — can relate to and feel less alone. She transforms joy and pain into something transcendent: art.

"This is an inspiring read, not only because it shows the strength of Britney's spirit, but because her story is told with such style, wit, intelligence, honesty, and without any self-pity. She is entirely winning in these pages.

"This book will... shake the world. I believe that it will also be a groundbreaking instant best-seller."

NEW ORDER'S EUROPEAN TOUR

PHOTO WARREN JACKSON

New Order will return to the stage this autumn with a string of tour dates across the UK and Europe.

The group will play shows in Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Paris, London, Dublin, Glasgow and Leeds throughout September and October, following on from a hugely successful run of gigs in North America in March.

The band's show at The O2 in London will be their first in the capital since a sold out performance in 2021, which was live streamed across the world.

Support for the UK and Ireland dates comes from Australian group Confidence Man, whose second album 'TILT' peaked in the UK Top 10 last year.

Tickets for all dates are on sale now.

MADONNA's 'Like a Virgin' and **MARIAH CAREY**'s *All I Want For Christmas is You* have been added to the U.S. National Recording Registry

WHEATUS are celebrating the 20th anniversary of their debut album with UK & Ireland Tour and extended reissue due later this year

TEARS FOR FEARS are returning to the stage with Part Two of 'The Tipping Point Tour' in North America this summer

BUSTED have expanded their 20th anniversary UK & Ireland Tour after selling out the first set of dates in under one hour

LINE-UP NEWS

KELLY FEELS THE CHEMISTRY

Kelly Clarkson is back with her 10th studio album 'Chemistry' due this summer.

Inspired by her 2020 divorce with Brandon Blackstock, the latest LP from the superstar clocks in at 14 tracks, including its lead singles *Mine* and *Me*.

"Having chemistry with someone is an incredible and overwhelming feeling. It's like you have no choice in the matter. You are just drawn to each other. This can be good and bad," says Kelly.

"This album takes you down every path that chemistry could lead you down."

Alongside the record, Kelly will also launch an intimate 10-night engagement at Las Vegas' Bakkt Theater (formerly Zappos Theater), beginning July 28.

Having originally been slated to perform a different show, titled 'Invincible', in April 2020 – with plans axed due to the pandemic – she's finally set a new run of dates to celebrate her latest material.

"The goal was to make a living doing what I love and I've been able to do that and connect with people. That's incredible. At 19, I was just looking to pay my water bill, I didn't have anything," she shares (via Billboard).

"It's a lot of hard work and a little bit of luck. I don't know if I ever thought it would be this big. I did not think I would end up having an exclusive little 10-show stint in Las Vegas."

The venue has been home to residency shows from stars including Gwen Stefani, Jennifer Lopez, Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera and Shania Twain in recent years.

'Chemistry' - featuring guest appearances from Steve Martin and Sheila E. - is out June 23 and available to pre-order now.

PHOTO BRIAN BOWEN SMITH

Take That's movie premiere

'Greatest Days', the movie adaptation of Take That's smash-hit stage musical 'The Band', will be released in cinemas this summer.

Featuring music from the group's decades-spanning catalogue, the film follows five best friends who have the night of their lives seeing their favourite boy band in concert.

Twenty-five years later their lives have changed in many different ways as they reunite for one more epic show by their beloved band, to relight their friendship and discover that maybe their greatest days are ahead of them.

Gary Barlow, Mark Owen and Howard Donald are executive producers for the film.

Directed by Coky Giedroyc from a script by Tim Firth, the film boasts an all-star cast including Aisling Bea, Alice Lowe, Jayde Adams, Amaka Okafor and Marc Wootton.

'Greatest Days' hits cinemas on on Friday, June 16

PHOTO LOIC THEBAUD

IN THE LOOP

CELINE DION will release five new songs on the soundtrack to her new movie 'Love Again'

NATASHA BEDINGFIELD is reportedly working on new music for release in 2024

NOEL GALLAGHER's High Flying Birds will return to the stage for a run of 2023 headline dates across the UK

KEN BRUCE is bringing PopMaster to TV screens with its first series set to launch on More4

TLC'S TV DOC

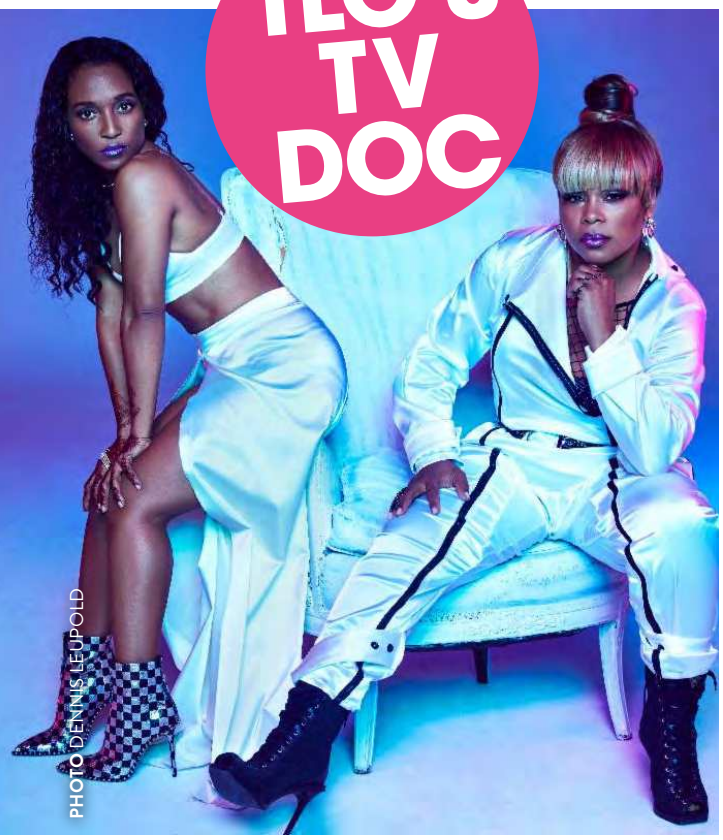


PHOTO DENNIS LEUPOLD

Lifetime has shared the first trailer for the forthcoming documentary special 'TLC Forever'.

Chronicling the journey of the *Waterfalls* group, who led the way with their music, message and style, the show features band members T-Boz and Chilli along other music industry colleagues - including Ahmir 'Questlove' Thompson and Missy Elliott - detailing their story and lives, revealing how they broke boundaries, influenced an entire generation and survived against all odds.

Formed in Atlanta, Georgia in 1990, TLC consisted of Tionne 'T-Boz' Watkins, Lisa 'Left Eye' Lopes and Rozonda 'Chilli' Thomas and the trio scored massive success over the following decade, selling over 85 million records, scoring four US No. 1s and earning numerous accolades.

However, alongside the success they experienced darkness, controversy and tragedy, as the group balanced worldwide fame and massive notoriety against internal fallouts, external attacks, bankruptcy, and illness.

"How are we meant to fight against the world if we're fighting internally?" they ask in the trailer.

When Left Eye died tragically after a car accident in 2002, the group faced immense pain and felt abandoned by the entertainment industry, but they persevered through the struggles and forged a new path to success.

The duo will continue to celebrate their career to date with a new tour set to launch over the summer.

'TLC Forever' premieres June 3 on Lifetime.

MISSY AND TIMBALAND REUNITE

Missy Elliott is working on new music with Timbaland with a view to release the tracks this summer.

The rapper hasn't released a studio album since 2005's 'The Cookbook' but according to her former Swing Mob collaborator, she's in the process of readying fresh material.

"We've got a lot of songs we're going to start recording soon, and my dream is to have it out around her birthday in July," he teased.

"I know how Missy works: It's got to be new and fun - or maybe not so much new as underground, and everything is upbeat."

Timbaland hinted some of Missy's new songs may also have a "Latin feel" and described the direction as "underground Brazilian funk".

"People gonna eat it up - and it might just reach a different demographic of people. It's like her doing... not Reggaeton but Missy-ton," he told Variety.

Back in December, Missy opened up on Twitter about how she and Timbaland originally started their partnership, penning: "My 1st album was stress-free because I didn't have any expectations.

"My label told me they would give me my own label If I did 1 album so me & @Timbaland completed this album in two weeks not knowing this would be the beginning of many more to come."

Missy recently returned to the UK charts with her FLO collaboration *Fly Girl*, with the track giving the trio their first Top 40 hit.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

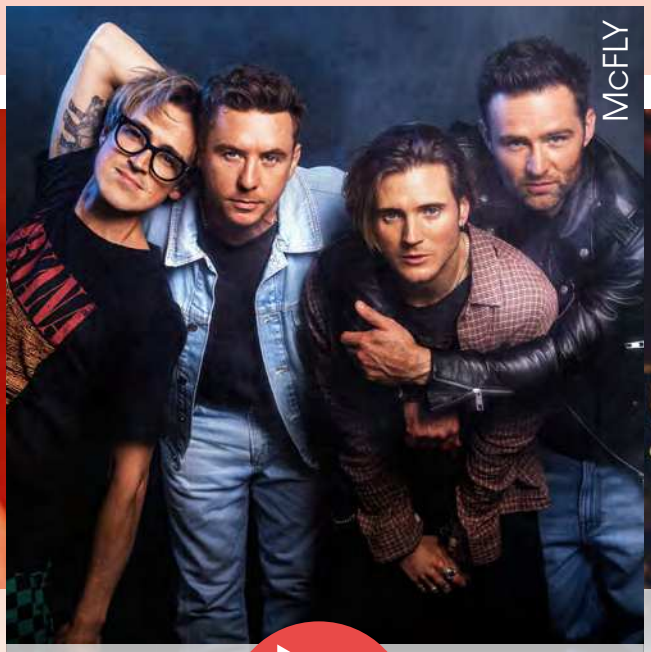
Tributes poured in for record executive **SEYMOUR STEIN** - credited for launching Madonna's career - following his death aged 80

PET SHOP BOYS are celebrating 35+ years of hits with their latest singles collection 'SMASH', due June 16

MARTI PELLOW will return to the stage with his massive 'Popped In Souled Out' arena tour, hitting venues across the UK next spring

GARY NUMAN will embark on his first-ever acoustic tour this autumn

KYLIE MINOGUE


McFLY

JAKE SHEARS

RETROPOP PLAYLIST

The latest releases from your favourite **RETROPOP** artists - all in one place!

KYLIE MINOGUE AND OLIVER HELDENS - *10 Out of 10* (RCA)
Returning with her first new music since 2021, Kylie teams up with Dutch Dj Oliver on her latest club anthem as she works behind the scenes to ready her hotly-anticipated 16th album. Nothing's been announced and we're already hyped!

JAKE SHEARS - *I Used To Be In Love* (Mute)
Continuing his mission to deliver the ultimate house party soundtrack on his hotly-anticipated second solo album 'Last Man Dancing', the Scissor Sisters star's latest release is a feelgood anthem about "abandoning your worries and finding yourself right at home in a crowd of strangers".

MCFLY - *Where Did All The Guitars Go?* (BMG)
After dabbling with synths on their 2020 comeback LP 'Young Dumb Thrills', McFly return to their pop punk roots and go all-in with a rocking anthem that introduces a bold new era for the band.

V V BROWN - *Black British* (YOY)
Returning to music 15 years after her debut, singer-songwriter V V gets political on her powerful, funk-driven comeback - the first instalment of an extended project that forms the basis of her upcoming album.

KELLY CLARKSON - *Me* (Atlantic)
Launching her latest long-player 'Chemistry', *Me* is one of two lead tracks; a soaring, self-empowerment anthem with a powerhouse vocal from the original 'American Idol' who has truly never sounded better.

KAISER CHIEFS - *Jealousy* (Self-Released)
After surprising us earlier this year with their Nile Rodgers-influenced comeback *How 2 Dance*, Ricky Wilson and co continue in a similar vein on its follow-up; an upbeat alt-pop tune that references the explosive anthems that first made them chart stars.

ALISON GOLDFRAPP - *NeverStop* (Skint)
Co-written and -produced with Richard X, the Goldfrapp star's solo endeavour goes from strength to strength with the second single from 'The Love Invention' as she celebrates new beginnings and living in the moment.

TAMAR BRAXTON - *Changed* (Platform)
Another sad love song? This time it's the youngest Braxton sister Tamar who's pouring out her heart as she returns to music with a lush mid tempo R&B number that showcases her inimitable tone.

JESSIE WARE - *Begin Again* (EMI)
Lifted from the superb 'That! Feels Good!', the singer-songwriter's disco domination continues with another triumph of a single - the livelier sequel to *Remember Where You Are* - that ranks among her strongest releases yet.

SOPHIE ELLIS-BEXTOR - *Lost In The Sunshine* (Cooking Vinyl)
The third track to be issued from her upcoming, Japanese-inspired LP 'HANA' is a rousing anthem "about a lazy, hazy, hot, romantic, perfectly sunny day with the one you love," showcasing the pop great's distinctive vocals over a building instrumentation that dissipates to leave only the sound of the chirping of birds.

PHOTOS DARENOTE LTD, HARIS NUKEM, MUTE

HOW TO LISTEN

Scan the QR code and check out all the **RETROPOP** *playlists in one place, over on Spotify!*

Top Of The Pops *tales*

Step back in time as we revisit classic moments from the 'Top of the Pops' archives!

#13 ORANGE JUICE SPILLAGE

March 23, 1983: Orange Juice – *Rip It Up*

Glaswegian indie band Orange Juice's second 'Top of the Pops' appearance is memorable for two things: some crushingly literal choreography, and the belligerent drunkenness it inspired in the group.

Rip It Up was the name of their hit, so someone decided it'd be clever to intermittently cut to dance troupe Zoo, performing a routine in which they tore up pieces of paper.

The group were not impressed, as frontman Edwyn Collins told Uncut in 2019: "You form a band in a creative bubble and you have your own ideas of integrity. Then suddenly you're on 'Top of the Pops' and you confront the machine." The machine was immovable: Zoo *would* perform their paper-ripping dance. "We said no. They insisted."

"As the day went on and we had more to drink we got more insistent," bassist David McClymont told the same publication in 2010. It didn't help that their backstage preparations saw speed added to the mix. "By the time we appeared I was very highly strung," he added. "As soon as I saw the dancing girls ripping up paper, I lost it."

Taking the brunt of his frustration was JG Thirlwell (known for his solo project Foetus), a friend who'd tagged along to mime the saxophone. Come the sax break, McClymont crossed to Thirlwell's podium, jostling him and headbutting his shoulder, before unsteadily staggering back onto the main stage. "I could hardly sing for laughing," Collins recalled.

Afterwards, Collins and McClymont were hauled in front of their label bosses at Polydor for a stern ticking off. "Both of us were trying not to burst out laughing at the ludicrousness of it all," McClymont remembered. "They were all doom and gloom, saying the single would fall out of the charts because of my abominable behaviour." (In fact, it climbed to No. 8.)

"They made us write an apology to [TotP producer] Mike Hurll," Collins told Record Collector in 2012, "saying that we'd been very naughty boys and we'll never do it again!" **RP**

● ***Follow @TOTPFacts on Twitter for live trivia commentary on the BBC Four repeats.***

TOP 10
THE OFFICIAL CHART FOR MARCH 20, 1983

1 *DURAN DURAN*
Is There Something I Should Know?
2 *BONNIE TYLER*
Total Eclipse of the Heart
3 *EURYTHMICS*
Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)
4 *THE STYLE COUNCIL*
Speak Like a Child
5 *DAVID BOWIE*
Let's Dance
6 *FORREST*
Rock the Boat
7 *BANANARAMA*
Na Na Hey Hey Kiss Him Goodbye
8 *MICHAEL JACKSON*
Billie Jean
9 *ORANGE JUICE*
Rip It Up
10 *MODERN ROMANCE*
High Life

WORDS IAN BERRIMAN **PHOTOS** BBC / TOP OF THE POPS

PROMISES

Revisiting her early recordings for a new box set release, **Beverley Craven** takes a whistle-stop tour through her whirlwind success.

WORDS SIMON BUTTON

When Beverley Craven was starting out as a songwriter all she wanted was "a C90 cassette with my songs on both sides that I could play to my mates when they came round".

For the Buckinghamshire-raised fledgling singer-songwriter, who'd studied classical piano but found it boring, things just snowballed from there. "Very soon I was buying the Melody Maker looking for people to work with. I moved to London and lived in a squat in Camden Town with a bunch of musicians who were in bands that were a lot more advanced than I was. All I had was a little Casio keyboard with a beatbox that my mum had bought me. I wrote my little songs there."

Out of such humble beginnings careers are made. Craven's song *Promise Me* took her to No. 3 in the UK charts in 1991. Her self-titled debut long player, which originally came out the previous year, eventually matched that success, going on to spend nearly a year on the Albums Chart and selling more than 1.2 million copies worldwide.

Beverley's patience was tested when Europe embraced her before the UK did, but she was philosophical about it: "Before the record came out I remember holding a copy with my name on it and thinking, 'Even if this isn't successful I've still got an album that I can show to my grandchildren'.

The record company wanted to release *Promise Me* as the first single and its composer mused, "Well, I'm screwed now because there's nothing like it on the radio". She felt it was old-fashioned: "But as Muff Winwood, who was my A&R man at the time, said 'You have to do something that's different to everything else in the charts'."

Muff was right - even if the song didn't even chart on its first UK release. "That was disappointing," Beverley admits. "But I was all over Europe, away from home every week promoting the album left, right and centre for over a year."

> "Music is like time travel. It takes you back to a different era."

With the single and the album doing well in the likes of France, Norway and Switzerland, Muff suggested they reissue them in the UK and this time it worked. As Craven says with hindsight: "It's all about luck and timing."

More than three decades after she struck it lucky, 'Beverley Craven' and the follow-ups 'Love Scenes' (1993) and 'Mixed Emotions' (1999) are featured in new box set 'Memories - The Complete Epic Recordings 1990-1999' along with 18 bonus tracks, alternate versions and live recordings.

It's been a trip down memory lane for the 59-year-old vocalist, who got hooked on a pop career after seeing Kate Bush doing her *Wuthering Heights* routine on 'Top of the Pops' and ELO performing *Telephone Lines*.

She'd been studying classical piano from a young age. "But I thought 'Oh God, this classical lark is a bit boring, isn't it?' It was scales and exam pieces and kind of joining the dots," laughs Beverley. "So I sat down at the piano and tried to work out my own chords, which was like starting again because when you're used to reading the instructions it's very difficult to come up with your own thing. You discover what chord progressions are, how to construct a melody and how to portray a sentiment. Being a songwriter was an entirely different animal to the classical, conventional approach."

It took a while before she found her sound. "At one point I saw myself as a female Howard Jones with a bank of keyboards around me," she laughs. "Minus the mime artist, of course. I thought that would be the way I'd go but I had a few ballads and people responded best to those, so that was the direction I went in."

After signing a development deal with Epic Records, Craven was dispatched to Los Angeles to hone her craft in bars and restaurants. Her publishers also put her in touch with a bunch of songwriters that she might enjoy working with. "But I'd never collaborated with anyone and I didn't know how to. I still don't," she

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

insists. "I know there are huge benefits to be had from writing with someone because it can take you somewhere you wouldn't normally go, but I find the compromise quite tricky. My gut has always told me to just do it myself."

She did, however, cover ABBA's *The Winner Takes It All* for a tribute album that never saw the light of day. It ended up as the last track on 'Love Scenes' (1993) and no, she never had any feedback about it from the Swedish superstars. She quips: "That would have been a letter worth keeping for the scrapbook, wouldn't it?"

Motherhood meant a six-year gap between her second and third albums, much to the dismay of the record company - and even though she had an eight-album deal, she was dropped. "It felt like a smack in the face," she says now. "It was such a curveball. They were no longer into what I did so that was that."

She's since recorded a couple of albums in her home studio, "which was a learning curve," but admits: "Listening to those albums now, I think they could have done with a producer on them. They didn't have that sparkle."

Beverley has been diagnosed with cancer twice, first in 2004 and again in 2018, and says now: "I'm hopeful that I've managed to beat it for a second time but it has knocked the stuffing out of me."

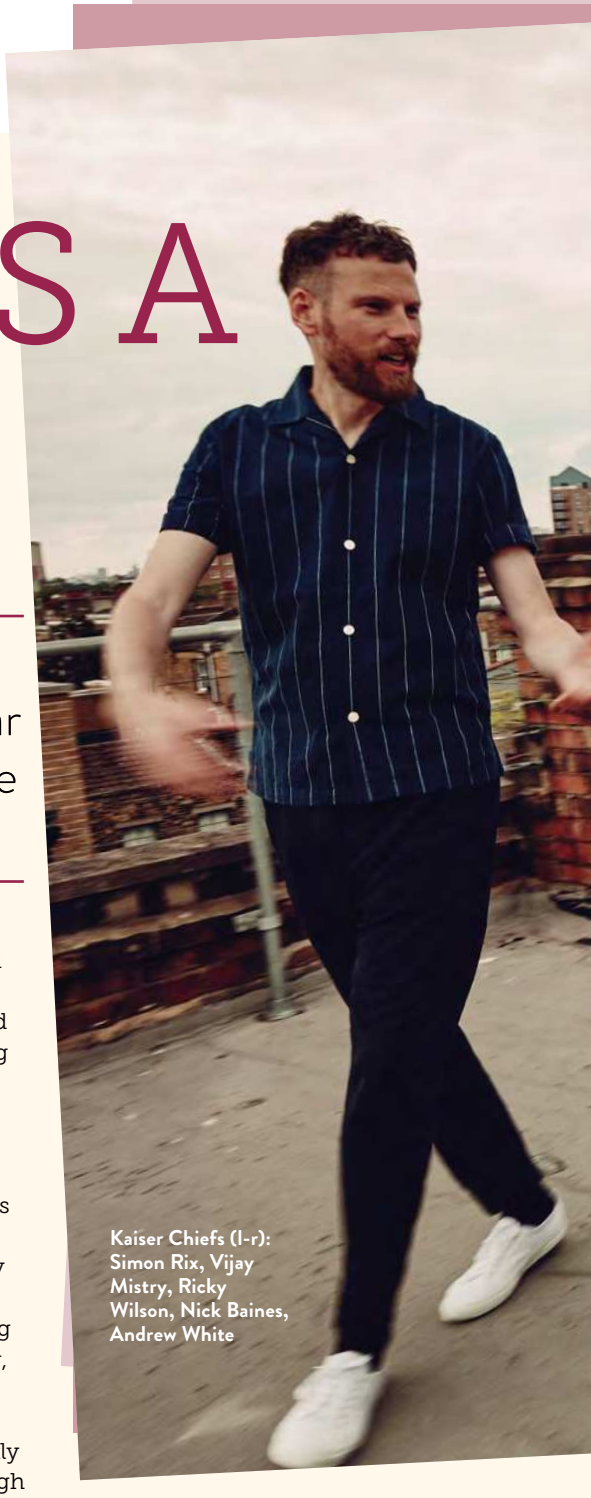
It hasn't stopped her working, though. She's toured with Julia Fordham, Judie Tzuke and Rumer on the 'Woman to Woman' tours and is happy to sing the songs that people love. "It's all about nostalgia. That's the kind of artist I am now. I represent a certain time, the early-nineties, and music is like time travel. It takes you back to a different era. I still do a bit of writing but I'm nowhere near as productive as I was when I was younger."

Craven and Tzuke are hitting the road again in October for their 'Strings Attached' tour, which she describes as a "sit and listen to every word" sort of show. And she's in awe of her co-star. "Judie was an artist I grew up listening to and loving," she grins. "I still have to pinch myself that I get to be on the same stage as her." **RP**

● ***Memories - The Complete Epic Recordings 1990-1999 is out May 26 on Cherry Red Records***

NEVER MISS A BEAT

With a packed summer of live shows and new music on the horizon, **Kaiser Chiefs** star Simon Rix looks forward to a new era for the chart-topping group.



Kaiser Chiefs (l-r): Simon Rix, Vijay Mistry, Ricky Wilson, Nick Baines, Andrew White

How were the past three years for you?

It already feels like a long time ago! I feel like everyone's experience was very different but for me, it wasn't too bad at all. I think as a band it was actually good for us to take a complete break from music and touring.

There were definitely some worrying moments where you wondered if we'd ever play a normal gig again and how being a musician could possibly work in a Covid world. But luckily that hasn't transpired...

Once we came out of lockdown, how was your first gig back and how did you feel about live music returning? Was it emotional for you?

We were lucky enough to be able to do some socially distanced things during Covid. And then played one of the test festivals in 2021. So all the time I think we were investigating how we could keep going.

The very first gig was just weird. It was a drive-in so everyone was really far apart and far away and at the end you could see a few cars sneaking out to avoid the rush. We'd all driven down separately and were socially distanced from the crew and each other to some extent so playing together as a band was good but the gig itself just really weird.

After that I think the first proper thing was Latitude. That was mad because after so many months of rules and masks it was just a free-for-all. It was absolutely ace to be playing to a normal crowd singing along and everything, but it felt like it was 'wrong'.

> Being on stage is the best. It's the moment that all the work is for!

I think people quickly readjusted back though and on our tour last year you could see remnants of old Covid signs and things, but everything is basically the same as it was three years ago.

What can you tell us about your latest album?

Our latest album is still 2019's 'Duck', but we've been busy making a new one and the first single, *How 2 Dance*, went really well. We played it on the tour in November and the reaction was great!

When it comes to songwriting, do you usually start with lyrics or melody?

It all depends, but I'd say neither. Usually it'll be the vibe and chords of the song that will get built on, but I guess we never know it's good until the melody is on there. And a lyrical hook.

Which part of the process do you enjoy most: being on stage, recording in the studio, or promoting your work?

Probably being on stage is the best. It's the moment that all the work is for. All the writing, travelling and promoting means you get to go on stage and play your music to loads of people, which they enjoy and I enjoy. So everyone is happy.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Is there anyone you haven't worked with and would like to collaborate with?
In general, I think we are quite happy to just do our thing. But for the new album we've worked with a couple of interesting folks, so maybe that will inspire us...

What has been your most defining moment of your career to date?
I'm probably not the best person to answer that. I generally say Glastonbury in 2005 was a real moment where I felt like things were going well, but it's probably the day I met each of the Kaiser Chiefs.

Which song or album would be the soundtrack to a film about your life?
It would be *Oh My God* by Kaiser Chiefs, I presume. If not, maybe *The Distance* by Cake.

When you're on the road on touring, what do you miss most?
The obvious answer is my cat and dog but it's actually probably something much more practical - like my shower.

Do you prefer playing arenas or do you enjoy outdoor gigs more?
I like it all. I think those two are more similar than you'd think, really. It depends on the audience. And who else is playing.

Finally, what can people expect from you at Trentham Live 2023?
If you've seen Kaisers, then you know what to expect. It'll be a great night out. All the hits. And some future hits as well. **RP**

● ***Trentham Live 2023 takes place August 16 - 20, with Kaiser Chiefs performing alongside Razorlight on August 19. Tickets for all five shows - also starring McFly, Feeder, Chase & Status and Olly Murs - are on sale now.***

Viva la RADIO

Over two years at the turn of the Millennium, she released a string of hit records - but whatever happened to **Lolly**?

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

The late-nineties brought with it a sea of pop music from an up-and coming generation of talent, including S Club 7, Steps, Aqua... and Lolly!

Arriving on the scene in 1999, the British star launched into the UK Top 10 with her debut single *Viva La Radio*, while a cover of Toni Basil's *Mickey* became a Top 5 hit.

With a massive audience of young fans, she went on to release two hit albums before quitting music in favour of a TV career, fronting shows on the BBC and Nickelodeon, but two decades on and she's back doing what she does best.

HAVIN' FUN

"I'd always said no to doing gigs as Lolly, but in 2018 my music was released digitally and when I looked it had two million streams and I realised people actually *wanted* to listen to it," beams the singer, real name Anna Kumble.

It's been 23 years since Lolly's final Polydor single, a cover of Cyndi Lauper's *Girls Just Want To Have Fun*, was released - the final of five hit records in just over 12 months, before she began a near-20-year hiatus from music.

Before launching her pop career, Lolly trained in musical theatre and appeared in stage productions, while her work in a band led to her networking with producers who presented her with her big break.

"I left home at 16 and went to musical theatre college. I was in a band for a while, then left that band because I wanted to do musical theatre, but I still remained friends with the producers and they were putting together S Club at the time," she recalls. "They were doing other things as well and they had this idea for an artist that looked like they'd been imported from Japan or something like that. So that was the initial concept for Lolly."

> **It was a job; I put the hair up and I was Lolly, and then took it down and I was Anna.**

She wasn't the first to be considered for the job. "They found Rachel Stevens in a shoe shop and asked her to audition. She did a few songs but it didn't quite work out, so they put her in S Club," she shares. "They had me in mind right from the start, but they

thought I wouldn't do it because I was in 'Starlight Express' at the time. Anyway, the call came when I was just leaving 'Starlight' and I was like, 'Yeah, I'd love to do it'. They said, 'Oh, my God - come in,' and we recorded it, got a deal, and it just went from there. It was so organic and actually very easy."

Released as the first single from the aptly-titled 'My First Album', *Viva La Radio* peaked at No. 6 on the charts, with its cool artwork showing the young star with her signature tied-up hair and name styled in neon. Although marketed to a young crowd, she was 21 when her first single came out - which, according to the performer, helped her manage the situation better.

"I did love pop music. I loved Steps and B*Witched and Spice Girls, and all that kind of stuff," she beams. "But for me, it was a job; I put the hair up and I was Lolly, and then took it down and I was Anna. That's how I coped with it.

"When I released it, people just thought I was this silly kid, but it was an act," she admits. "But it was a fun act. It was great! It was really good fun to go around and do that."

Naturally, her youthful look went in her favour, but Lolly admits that her years of experience in the industry beforehand opened her eyes to the work involved and helped her adjust to life as a pop star.

"I understood work ethic and understood professionalism; I got what I had to be and what I had to do," she muses. "If it was just me as Anna, I don't think I could have coped with it. People say I'm like an introverted extrovert, because I also like some me time and family time."

> **We recorded it, got a deal, and it just went from there. It was so organic and actually very easy!**

SAY THE WORD

Releasing two albums in under two years is work in itself; let alone all of the promotion and travel that is required to meet sales targets and keep record executives happy.

"It was *very* busy," she laughs. "Even just the amount of magazines, which all had separate shoots. It wasn't like now where they say, 'Oh, give us a selfie,' and you can pop it out. It was full-on shoots, then you'd have days of doing interviews over the phone or having people come to you..."

The industry may have advanced over the past two decades but Lolly admits she's relieved she didn't have the pressures of social media added to her schedule back in the day. "It's great that you can create your own content - but they want your blood," she laughs. "People expect to see you getting dressed, all the behind the scenes stuff... We'd do pictures and things like that, but it was kind of contrived and you were still in control, whereas now they expect it even more because you've got your phone. There's no patience in it anymore.

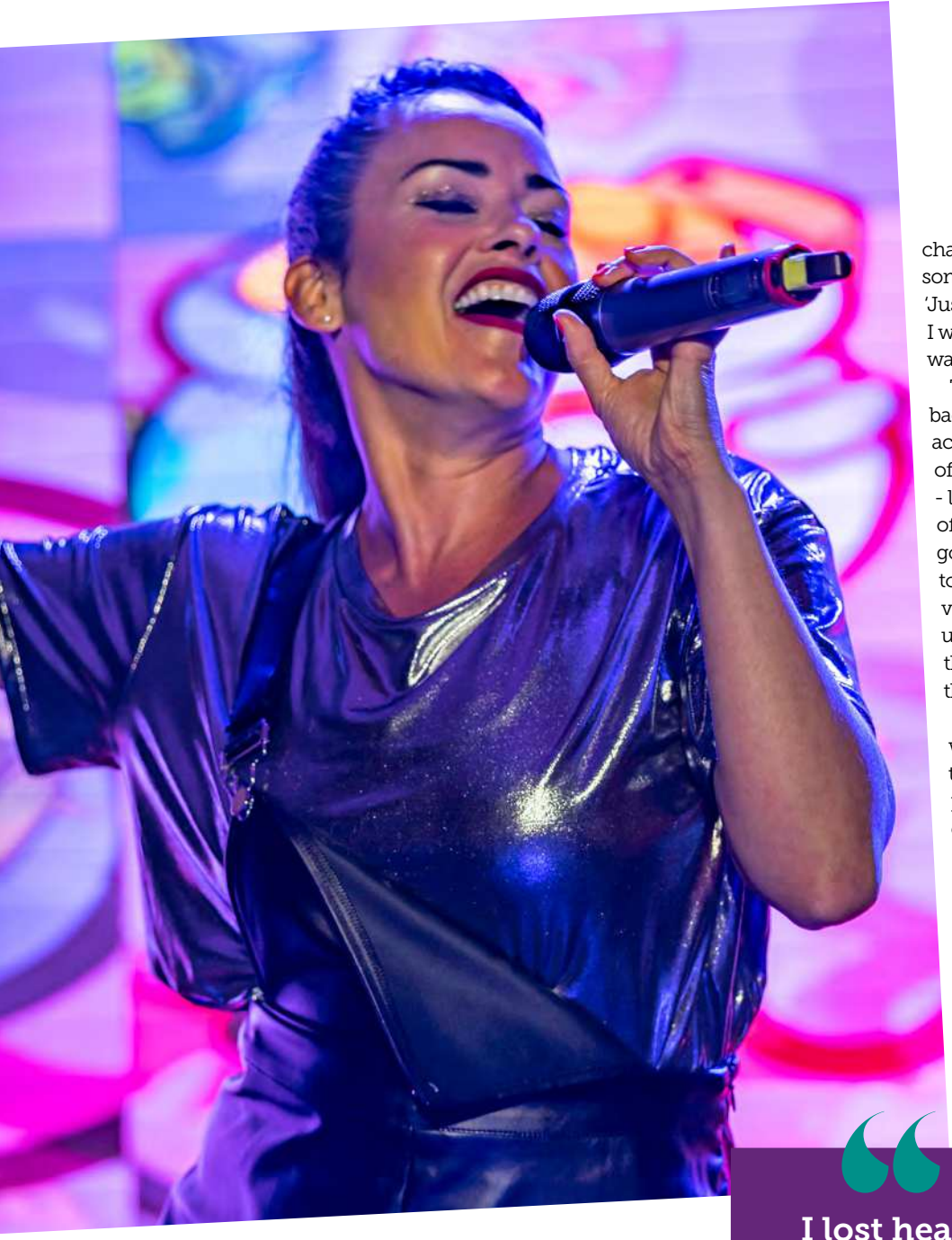
"I mean, can you imagine trying to do that back in the day - you would never have had any time," she adds. "But then you don't have the TV shows that I had, like 'SMTV', 'CD:UK', 'Live & Kicking', 'Fully Booked'... Hundreds and hundreds of kids shows! Now, you have to do it yourself, so if you're not creative you're going to really struggle."

Another big difference is the budgets from record labels in the nineties, back when releasing music was profitable. "You have to be out doing PAs to be making money because you're not gonna get it off record sales! What is it, 0.001p per stream or something," she sighs. "It's sad, because at the end of the day everybody needs music and I think especially with lockdown, everybody realised how important music and entertainment was. But if songwriters aren't getting paid to produce the music, where's it gonna go?"

While doing the rounds plugging her music, Lolly was brushing shoulders with the biggest pop stars on the planet - a fact she only came to really appreciate down the line when she looked back at her whirlwind success.

"I'm so humbled by it and I think if I could breathe then, I would have been really starstruck," she reflects, "but you're just thrown into situations and have to deal with it. You realise people are just people - we're all human beings - especially when it's idols that you meet. It's only afterwards that you look back and go, 'I can't believe that!'."

There's one star she never got to meet: "I grew up absolutely adoring Janet Jackson and I got to see her at 'Top of the Pops'. I was literally an audience member; we were filming next door and I snuck in to be in the audience. I remember screaming 'I love you Janet' and waving, and she blew me a kiss. It was ridiculous, a proper fangirling moment, but I didn't properly meet her.



I don't know if I'd like to - it's probably best to keep her a bit of a mystery."

BETTER THAN EVER

Following the release of her second album 'Pick 'n' Mix' in 2000, Lolly gave up music and embarked on a successful TV career; a move that came about after she was dissatisfied with the label's decision to release *Girls Just Want To Have Fun* as a single.

"I didn't really agree with doing it," she maintains. "I said to the record label, 'I'll go out and sell it, but I just think I'm alienating half of my audience'. You know, boys like to have fun as well! So I kind of lost heart and I realised it really was a machine and that I had to just do what they said, because they weren't listening."

During her pop years, Lolly dipped her toes into the world of TV presenting and it was down that path she continued, with the backing of the record company, who helped her put together a showreel to launch her latest endeavour. "I just said, 'Look, I don't want to do this anymore,' and they were like, 'Well, you've done really well, you've recouped...' So I've got no bad blood and I'm still friends with a lot of the people from Polydor. I literally just decided to stop."

> **I lost heart and I realised it really was a machine and that I had to just do what they said.**

Although she stayed busy in the years that followed, she does have one regret: "I remember interviewing Jacqueline Gould, the founder and owner of Ann Summers, and she was like, 'Why didn't you keep 'Lolly'? Think about the millions that were spent promoting you as that person, then you just decided to change your name!'," she laments. "If somebody back then would have said, 'Just carry on with the name,' I think I would have, but I just was like, 'No, I want to be me!'."

The irony, of course, is that she's back as Lolly and playing to crowds across the UK this summer, with a set of her classic hits and a few surprises - like a Kim Wilde-approved cover of *Kids In America* - thrown in for good measure. And when it comes to her audiences, she's thrilled by the volume of 20-somethings that grew up on her music, and LGBTQ+ fans that have supported her throughout the years.

"What's really lovely is my music was pitched at the younger end of the market, and now those younger people have grown up and it's slid over to the LGBTQ+ community, which has really embraced it," she beams. "They love pop music and love just having a good time. That community has such a wholesome, family sort of feel and it's nice to see that and embrace it and feel the love from it. It really is enjoyable, because the minute they see a pom pom, they go wild!"

Back in 2018, after her classic records were issued digitally, Lolly released the original track *Stay Young and Beautiful* on her own label Lollydor, and has released a handful of singles in the years since. She doesn't have new music in the pipeline right now, but it's not off the cards.

"I was going to get back in the studio, but my daughter Belle has just turned 16 and she's releasing songs now, so I've kind of been put on the backburner," she laughs. "It's been quite nice helping develop and guide her - doing it all again from a different angle, I guess. So I haven't at the moment but you never know. Never say never..." **RP**

● ***Lolly will perform as part of the Preston Live 2023 music festival at Moor Park, Preston on Saturday, July 22. Tickets are on sale now.***

PHOTOS PA IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

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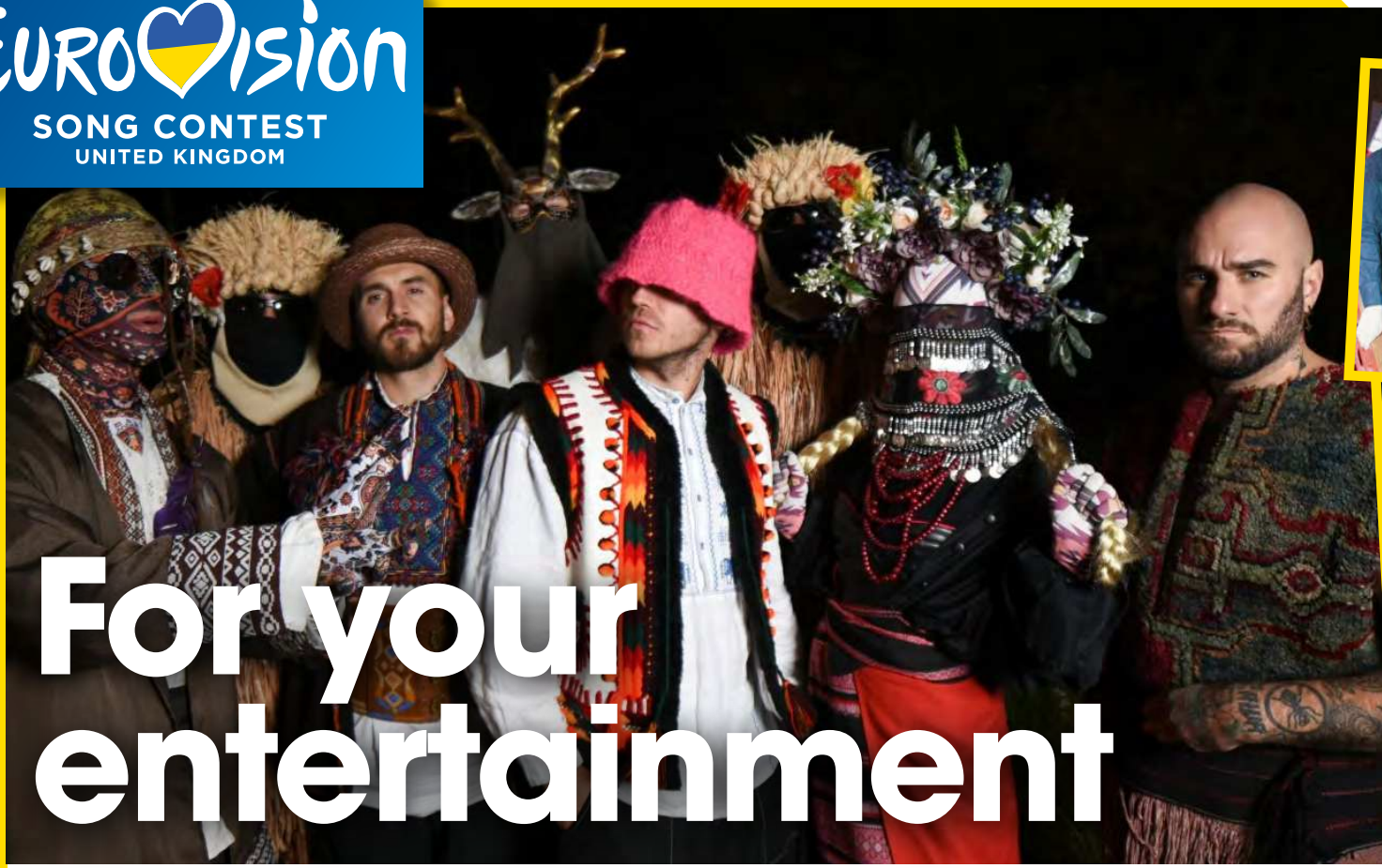
EUROVISION

SONG CONTEST

UNITED KINGDOM
LIVERPOOL 2023

Get clued up on all the goings on from the 67th Eurovision Song Contest - including guest performer details and an exclusive chat with returning star Loreen - inside...

EUROVISION SONG CONTEST UNITED KINGDOM



For your entertainment

The 26 entries may be the main event but there's plenty more to look forward to during the three Eurovision heats...

GRAND FINAL Saturday, May 13

During the Grand Final, an extensive line-up of Eurovision stars from throughout the years will take to the stage, including last year's winners, Ukraine's Kalush Orchestra, who will open the show with a powerful performance titled 'Voices of a New Generation'.

As Liverpool hosts the event on behalf of the country, it's only fitting that they kick off proceedings in style, with their showcase set to feature their smash hit winning song *Stefania*.

"We've been looking forward to performing in Liverpool ever since it was announced as host last year," they share. "The city has a world-renowned musical heritage and we're delighted to finally be able to announce what an honour it will be for us to be there.

"While we're sad that we couldn't bring the Eurovision Song Contest back to our home country, we're really grateful to the UK for hosting this party on our behalf. We will perform for everyone in Ukraine to remind us that better days and our country's victory is ahead, as well as to show the world what Ukraine is fighting for."

During the Eurovision Flag Parade of all 26 Grand Finalists, there'll be a unique performance by some iconic past Ukrainian Eurovision contestants, with GO_A, Jamala, Tina Karol, and Verka Serduchka set to blend their Eurovision entries with British classics.

Once all 26 acts have performed and voting is taking place across Europe and the world, the UK's Sam Ryder will make his triumphant return to the Contest, after which six iconic past Eurovision acts will come together to celebrate 'The Liverpool Songbook'.

Italy's Mahmood, Israel's Netta, Iceland's Daði Freyr, Sweden's Cornelia Jakobs, Duncan Laurence from the Netherlands, and Liverpool's very own Sonia will put their own spin on classic hits from artists whose careers started in the city.

Then, it's time for the big reveal as votes come in from around the world and the winner of the 2023 Eurovision Song Contest is crowned.

The running order for the Grand Final won't be announced until after both Semi-Finals have taken place, but in line with tradition the host nations - Ukraine and the United Kingdom - have already been allocated their positions: 19 - Ukraine 26 - United Kingdom

PHOTO BBC / EBU

Go-A

Sam Ryder

Mahmood

Sonia

Daði Freyr

SEMI-FINALS

Although the Semi-Finals - which whittle 37 entries down to just 26 - are tense for the performers, they're set to deliver on the entertainment front with an impressive line-up of pre- and mid-show spectacles.

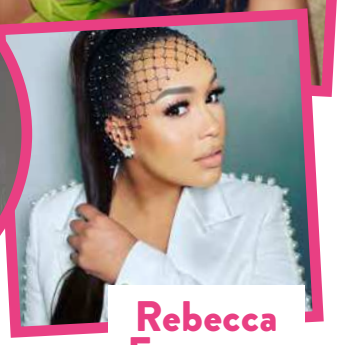
SEMI-FINAL 1
Tuesday, May 9

Opening the first show is host Julia Sanina, who will perform part of Маяк by her band The Hardkiss, translating from the Ukrainian for *Lighthouse* and symbolising how the UK and Ukraine are 'United by Music'.

If that's not enough, during the interval Rita Ora will deliver a show-stopping medley of some of her biggest hits along with her brand-new single *Praising You*, while Ukrainian singer Alyosha – who represented Ukraine in Eurovision 2010 and was forced to leave her country and loved ones behind to seek refuge – will perform alongside Liverpool's Rebecca Ferguson on a haunting arrangement of Duran Duran's *Ordinary World*.

Rita Ora

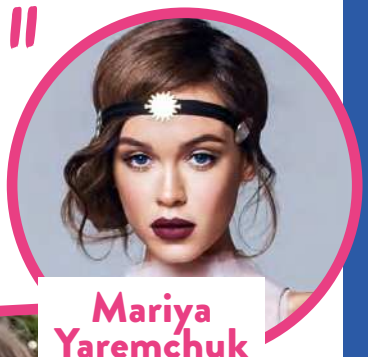
Alyosha


Rebecca Ferguson

SEMI-FINAL 2
Thursday, May 11

With two live interval performances, the second Semi-Final's entertainment kicks off with 'Music Unites Generations', which explores the connection between generations of Ukrainians and the music they love. Mariya Yaremchuk, who represented Ukraine in Eurovision 2014, leads a contemporary montage of some of the most well-known pieces of music from the country, ending with a stunning collaborative performance from rapper OTOY, 14-year-old Ukrainian Junior Eurovision representative Zlata Dziunka, and Mariya.

It's followed by another performance called 'Be Who You Wanna Be', which celebrates how Eurovision is a place for everyone – no matter who you are - and sees three extraordinary drag performers lead into a jaw-dropping routine of high-end pop performances along with a troupe of eclectic dancers.


Mariya Yaremchuk

Zlata Dziunka

OTOY

EUROVISION SONG CONTEST UNITED KINGDOM

Eurovision at the BBC

In the build up to the 67th Eurovision Song Contest, the BBC has put together a superb line-up of programming as the national broadcaster prepares to host Liverpool 2023!

SPECIALS

Get in the mood for Eurovision with an extended line-up of one-off programming!

GET YOUR EUROVISION ON!

BBC iPlayer

BBC Eurovision Commentator for over 10 years Scott Mills is joined by EastEnders star Natalie Cassidy for a celebration of the pure joy, unity and downright banging tunes that is... Eurovision.

They will delve into some of the most iconic performances and look back at incredible staging, memorable moments and of course costumes.

Between them, Scott and Natalie will celebrate some of the biggest Eurovision moments of the past 20 years, and beyond, while looking forward to this year's competition in Liverpool.

EUROVISION SONG CONTEST'S TURQUOISE CARPET

EBU YouTube, May 7

The Turquoise Carpet Opening Ceremony launches the lead up to the Eurovision Song Contest in style and will take place at Liverpool's historic St George's Hall this year.

The show will see the city's own Sam Quek and Ukrainian Eurovision legend Timur Miroshnychenko welcome all 37 acts to the North West, as they get to know the performers and share the latest backstage gossip.

Introducing the upcoming week of festivities, highlights will air on BBC One and BBC iPlayer the following evening.

EUROVISION WELCOMES THE WORLD

BBC One / BBC iPlayer, May 8

Join hosts Rylan and Liverpool born actress Sunetra Sarker as they kick off the week of the Eurovision Song Contest.

The pair have an access areas pass to the Turquoise Carpet Opening Ceremony, plus highlights of The National Lottery's Big Eurovision Welcome – a one of a kind outdoor event to mark the start of Liverpool's big Eurovision week.

Plus, there will be music and jaw-dropping performances as the city kicks off the Eurovision celebrations with the specially curated outdoor spectacular.

EUROVISION CALLING: JASON AND CHELCEE'S ULTIMATE GUIDE

BBC One / BBC iPlayer, May 8

Comedian Jason Manford and singer-songwriter Chelcee Grimes explore why the Eurovision Song Contest is the greatest show on Earth, with a mix of archive footage and revealing interviews with fans, experts and competitors.

The one hour film will delve into the story of how the Contest has become the world's largest live music event, creating global superstars and leaving an impact on the lives of many, with insights from Sam Ryder - who came second last year - and Katrina Leskanich from Katrina and the Waves, who won in 1997.

Also featured is Mae Muller, who shares her personal connection with the Contest ahead of her big performance on Saturday.

EUROVISION: EVERYONE'S A WINNER

BBC One / BBC iPlayer, May 12

From Liverpool's world-famous waterfront, Fleur East presents a special Top 20 Eurovision Countdown of songs that missed out on the big prize but still went on to become monster hits.

Compiled by combining worldwide online streaming and viewing figures, Fleur reveals the Eurovision entries watched and listened to in their millions to an audience of famous faces including UK 2018 entrant SuRie, BBC

PHOTO JAMES STACK; BBC

Radio 1's Dean McCullough and 'Dr Eurovision' Paul Jordan.

Plus a host of Eurovision super-fans including Scott Mills, Claire Sweeney and Owain Wyn Evans, join the fun as the hits keep coming.

THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

Eurovision fever is set to take over regular programming as the buzz around Liverpool 2023 builds!

BBC BREAKFAST 'BBC Breakfast' will be live from Liverpool from Tuesday until Sunday. There will be reporters live from the waterfront, soaking up the atmosphere at the Eurovision Village and Liverpool Arena ahead of the live shows.

MORNING LIVE 'Morning Live' will be getting into the Eurovision spirit with a mix of stories, lives on location and a very special Eurovision takeover of Strictly Fitness, headed up by Ukrainian Strictly star Nikita Kuzmin.

THE ONE SHOW 'The One Show' will be relocating to Liverpool to become the official opening act for Eurovision every night from Tuesday through to the Saturday night Grand Final, with exclusive behind the scenes access to the latest preparations.

EASTENDERS Bucks Fizz star Cheryl Baker is set to arrive in Walford as herself as the residents of Albert Square celebrate the highly-anticipated arrival of the Contest in the UK, but why she ends up in Albert Square is yet to be revealed...

BARGAIN HUNT In this ESC special, the red team is Cheryl Baker and SuRie, up against a blue team of Carrie Grant - who was part of Sweet Dreams at Eurovision 1983 and has since headed up the UK's Eurovision jury - and 'The X Factor' finalist Andy Abraham, who represented the UK in 2008.

SATURDAY KITCHEN
'Saturday Kitchen Live' joins the Eurovision celebrations on the morning of the Grand Final with a special show featuring an international line-up of chefs showcasing their home style delights, with plenty of mouth-watering recipes, perfect for any Eurovision party!

POINTLESS CELEBRITIES: EUROVISION SPECIAL This 'Pointless Celebrities Eurovision Special' features a host of Eurovision faces competing not only for a charity prize, but to get their hands on that coveted 'Pointless' trophy. The four iconic pairs taking on the 'Pointless' column are Eurovision Handover and Allocation Draw presenter AJ Odudu and Radio 2's travel presenter and Eurovision super-fan Richie Anderson; Icelandic competitor Daði Freyr and Swedish winner Måns Zelmerlöw; Irish winners Linda Martin and Eimear Quinn; and Antony Costa from Blue (Eurovision 2011) with Bucks Fizz star Jay Aston.

THE HIT LIST: EUROVISION SPECIAL 'The Hit List' returns for a very special episode to celebrate all things Eurovision! Marvin and Rochelle Humes host this exciting music quiz which is jam-packed with the biggest Eurovision and chart hits.

ON THE RADIO

Eurovision fever isn't just taking over screens - Radio 2 has an exciting line-up of programming throughout the week too!

THE ZOE BALL BREAKFAST SHOW From Tuesday to Thursday, 'The Zoe Ball Breakfast Show' celebrates Eurovision, with Zoe in London and Richie Anderson in Liverpool. Richie will be broadcasting from iconic locations across the city, meeting Eurovision legends and local super-fans, with Zoe and the team heading up north on Friday ahead of a huge weekend for the city.

SCOTT MILLS Scott Mills will be broadcasting his show live from Liverpool on Wednesday and Friday, with Richie Anderson in the hot seat on Tuesday and Thursday as Scott prepares to host the live Semi-Finals with Rylan.

MICHELLE VISAGE Michelle Visage is going all out with the celebrations for her Handbag Hits in the final half-hour of the show, during which she'll be playing non-stop Eurovision bops, ending with a dramatic Eurovision edition of Lip Sync anthem.

EUROVISION SONG CONTEST UNITED KINGDOM

Like a tattoo

Ahead of her return to the main stage for a second shot at Eurovision victory, Sweden's **Loreen** discusses her journey back to music's biggest show!

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

Think of modern-day Eurovision icons and there's one name that will surely come to mind: Loreen.

The Swedish star made a global impact in 2012 when she rocketed to the top of the scoreboard with her EMD smash *Euphoria*, earning a total of 372 points, the second-highest total in the contest's history at the time.

Picking up the maximum 'douze points' from 18 countries, the single topped the charts across Europe - and now she's back for round two with her latest anthem, *Tattoo*.

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN

"I didn't see myself doing this again, but it just happened and I'm *so* excited about it," beams the singer of her return to Europe's biggest music platform. "It's so funny: you think you're heading in one direction but really we don't know. And that's a good thing. We think we know what's good for us and now I'm here, feeling so happy, and having the time of my life."

In the decade since her initial Eurovision success, Loreen has rarely slowed down, releasing two hit albums and a run of singles, while keeping one foot firmly in the Eurovision sphere and even making another bid in 2017 with her Melodifestivalen entry *Statements*.

It failed to qualify and Loreen questioned whether she'd ever return to the Contest, but when she received a call from Thomas G:son - the writer and producer behind *Euphoria*, along with Eurovision classics like Friends' *Listen To Your Heartbeat*, and Melodifestivalen entries such as Jenny Silver's *Something In Your Eyes*, Mariette's *A Million Years* and Charlotte Perrelli's *Still Young* - she was lured back in.

"I came home from the studio very late and the song was sent directly to me," she recalls. "Usually they come through a publicist or A&R or whatever, but this was sent straight to me and I thought, 'Well, this is interesting'. Thomas is a close friend of mine and he sends me songs; it's fun, it's a thing we have. So I put the song on and listened - verse, pre-chorus, first chorus - and after that I just shut it down, because I could feel in my whole body that something was happening. I was going to do something with the song...

"But he didn't mention Melodifestivalen or Eurovision. Nothing. It was just a song; it was an embryo, a demo, very simple. So I just went around the house and listened to it again, because it was an instant love. I called him like, 'You wrote this song for me, didn't you?' and he's like, 'Yeah, years ago'."

It took two years before *Tattoo* finally found its way into the hands of Loreen who admits that, although armed with the perfect Eurovision song, she initially resisted calls to enter the track into the running. "I'm very purpose driven, so when they asked, 'Do you feel like being in a competition again?' I'm like 'No. Why? What's my purpose?' There's a certain way to go with me and it takes some time..." she laughs. "But I really wanted to record the song; there were changes I wanted to do in terms of lyrics and production, but those things happened organically when we walked into the studio."

> I could feel in my whole body that something was happening. I was going to do something with the song...

Loreen adds: "But the process took a while. When they said, 'Do you want to do Melodifestivalen?' I was like, 'No'. Then a week later, still 'No'. But eventually it was a 'Yes'; it was always a 'Yes', but it's like when you're in love and you start out saying, 'No, I can't do this,' but it's the best thing ever."

While her winning anthem *Euphoria* erupted with huge choruses, *Tattoo* is more of a slow burn that allows Loreen to build her vocal over the entire three-minute duration to a rousing climax. It's less instant than her previous offering, but more a creative realisation of their artistic vision. "It's about trust, I guess. It's about not letting negative energies interfere," she reflects. "It's almost like making love; if you try to make it perfect, it just dies. You just have to let it flow. When you create, there's

EUROVISION SONG CONTEST UNITED KINGDOM

> I am disciplined as fuck for this: exercise, meetings, no life, no wine, no nothing. Oh, my God - I love it!

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

no such thing as perfect or good or bad - just flow..."

THROUGH FIRE AND RAIN

At Eurovision, the song is only part of the package and for her big return Loreen has planned an epic showcase to be performed between two huge LED screens. Making waves across social media following her Melodifestivalen performance, the creative direction no doubt played a part in her success to date and the vocalist says much of the look of her performance was her idea.

"The moment I recorded the song, I instantly knew, 'This is the space'," she shares. "Not musically - I see everything in colours and pictures. A song for me is not just a song. *Euphoria* was more like moonlight, whereas *Tattoo* is very much sunlight. It's the opposite. And I can't even explain why it comes to me like that, but it does and what I saw was something that looked like a sunset or a sunrise. So instantly, when I gathered my team, it was like, 'This is the space we're going to create'."

With one of the massive screens set to be lowered from the ceiling of the Liverpool Arena, doubts were cast early on about the feasibility of Loreen's performance making it to the Eurovision stage due to weight restrictions. But after going "back and forth" with organisers she's happy to confirm the performance will go ahead as planned. "My people were very determined. There's no such thing as 'No'; it's just a question of, 'How can we make it work? What can we do with it?'," she smiles.

Over the years, several artists have had multiple shots at Eurovision success, but in its 67-year history only Ireland's Johnny Logan has managed to win twice (with *What's Another Year?* in 1980 and again in 1987 with *Hold Me Now*). More recently, Sweden's 1999 winner Charlotte Perrelli attempted to follow-up *Take Me To Your Heaven* with *Hero* in 2008, but she finished in a disappointing 18th place, despite much anticipation surrounding her latest entry.

How does Loreen feel as the show approaches? "One side of me is very excited about the fact that people like what we've created, because I honestly didn't have any expectations walking in," she insists. "That's a dangerous path to be on. I have expectations of myself and I want things to be good and authentic, but for that I need to be very clear about why I'm doing this and not have the ego involved too much.

"So basically, my state of mind is, 'OK, I'm a servant of art and I'm here for you guys'. That is my role. That is my space. That's what I'm doing. When you have that way of thinking, it eases you and I love to be in that space. That's my favourite space to be in. I can be in the studio creating for myself - but fuck that, it's not as fun! If you create something that you know can make the audience feel strengthened or understand their own power, that's the space I love to be in."

It's that same approach that helped elevate *Euphoria* to be considered as one of the greatest modern-day Eurovision songs and, when it comes to that legacy, Loreen is confident it's secure alongside her latest endeavour. "It's about giving something to somebody else. If I give you a gift, you'd never be like, 'Loreen, you fucked up this gift over here!' Nobody works like that, you know?" she muses.

"I said this with *Euphoria*; we're intuitive, all of us, and you feel when a creator or when a person is real. Is it about *them* or *us*? You can sense that subconsciously and if it resonates with you, then you will dig it. So the pressure is high, but the pressure is about creating something that is authentic and real. That's my pressure. And I am disciplined as fuck for this: exercise, meetings, no life, no wine, no nothing. Oh, my God - I love it! I feel I have a purpose..."

> Be joyful and happy, because it's really hard to be prejudiced when you're in a good space.

HEART IN YOUR HAND

In the build up to Eurovision, Loreen is booked and busy with a packed schedule of appearances and performances across Europe - and with a legacy already under her belt, the anticipation to see her live is high. Having experienced the hype once before and remained a key player in the Eurovision sphere, she's looking forward to reconnecting with audiences across the continent and finally playing her new hit to the masses.

"Can you imagine standing there in front of so many people? This is a beautiful community and there are not that many communities like this left where everybody is included," she beams. "It's diverse, you're loved, the crazier you are the more loved you get - you can be whatever you want, whether it's religious background, colour, sexuality, whatever. You're welcome.

"We need to take care of this because the world is upside down and we're all trying to balance things up, you know? So the way that I balance this thing that's going on in the world is to be part of this community, Goddamnit! Be joyful and happy, because it's really hard to be prejudiced when you're in a good space. So I look forward to being part of something that is greater and bigger than myself."

This year, 37 entries will compete for one of 26 spaces in the Grand Final and although Loreen is a firm favourite, she faces fierce competition from the likes of last year's winners Ukraine, represented by Tvorchi with *Heart Of Steel*, along with hotly tipped entries from Finland's Käärijä with *Cha Cha Cha* and France's La Zarra with Évidemment, plus UK entry *I Wrote A Song* by Mae Muller.

On who she has her eye on, Loreen coyly insists she "watches all of them because they're all amazing creators," but she is looking forward to finally being in the same room together and getting to know the artists behind the music. "I met [Norway's performer] Alessandra when I was in Oslo and she's such a beautiful human being. I could see myself in her very, very much - she's a real warrior, female queen, but also very soft and smart," she shares, adding: "I only mention her because I've met her face-to-face and I'm a face-to-face person, but I have so much love in my heart for her."

Although she's a seasoned Eurovision pro, when it comes to advice for her fellow contestants Loreen may not be the best port of call. "I'll be like, 'You should be nervous. You should be nervous. Everybody should just stress out," she laughs, before quickly insisting: "No, no, no. Not really. They can all come to my space and meditate if they want to!" **RP**

EUROVISION SONG CONTEST UNITED KINGDOM

LONDON EUROVIS

Hailing from Lithuania, **MONIKA LINKYTĖ** delivered a dazzling performance of her song *Stay*

Austria's **TEYA & SALENA** had the crowd asking *Who the Hell Is Edgar?* with their lively showcase

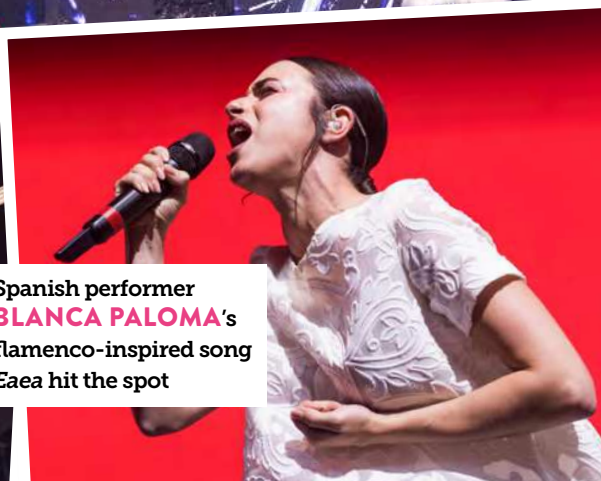
Slovenia's **JOKER OUT** rocked the house with their entry *Carpe Diem*

Eurovision legends **SENHIT** and **NICKI FRENCH** got the crowd going between performances

Having represented France in 2019 with the song *Roi*, **BILAL HASSANI** took the place of La Zarra who was unable to make the show

There was no time for sleeping as **LUKE BLACK** performed his entry for Serbia

Czechia's **VESNA** celebrated sisterhood with their equality anthem *My Sister's Crown*



Spanish performer **BLANCA PALOMA**'s flamenco-inspired song *Eaea* hit the spot

Moldova's **PASHA PARFENI** commanded the stage with a spectacular rendition of *Soarele și luna*

Back for round two, Sweden's **LOREEN** delivered the goods with *Tattoo* and, of course, *Euphoria*

ION PARTY 2023

Coming together under one roof at London's HERE at Outernet on April 16, the Eurovision Class of 2023 treated fans from around the world to a truly international showcase!

Even **RYLAN** got in on the action as he took over the stage between acts

From the streets of Azerbaijan to the London Eurovision Party, Azerbaijan's **TURALTURANX** soaked up the spotlight

TikTok sensation **REILEY** from Denmark surely broke a few hearts as he delivered his track

Eurovision SONG CONTEST UNITED KINGDOM

Australian rockers **VOYAGER** had the crowd on a *Promise* with their Eurovision anthem

Norway's **ALESSANDRA** had everyone on their feet as she proved herself Queen of the London Eurovision Party

Throwing it back to 2021, Azerbaijan's **NIKKI** stopped by to say hi

Estonia's **ALIKA** shut the place down with a powerful performance of her ballad *Bridges*

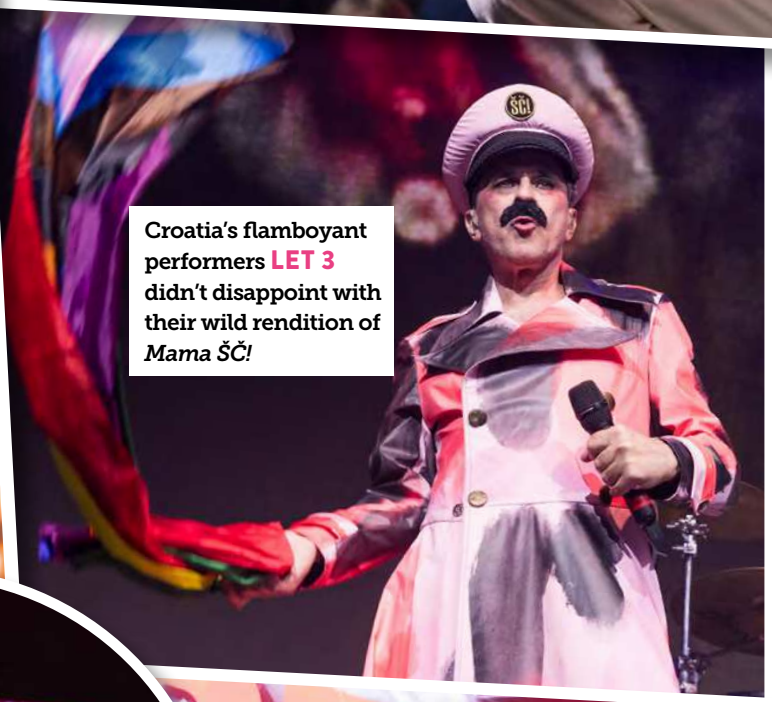
She wrote a song and she's gonna sing it - the UK's **MAE MULLER** proved a hit

Romanian star **THEODOR ANDREI** rocked the stage with his performance of *D.G.T. (Off and On)*

PHOTOS CORINNE CUMMING / EBU

San Marino's emerging entrants **PIQUED JACKS** continued to build their global fan base with *Like an Animal*

THE BUSKER had everyone dancing as they delivered their entry for Malta and made the party their own



Croatia's flamboyant performers **LET 3** didn't disappoint with their wild rendition of *Mama ŠČ!*

From Portugal, **MIMICAT**'s *Ai coração* proved another crowd pleaser on the night

Even last year's Junior Eurovision entry for the UK, **FREYA SKYE**, hit the stage for a performance

WILD YOUTH turned up the heat and flashed some flesh for a winning performance of Ireland's *We Are One*

He represented Ukraine back in 2018 and now **MELOVIN** returned as his country takes centre stage

NICKI FRENCH
EUROVISION
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **Out Now Digitally (CD - May; Vinyl - September)**
Energise
FORMATS: **CD, Limited Edition Blue and Red Marble Vinyl**

Nicki French celebrates her love of all things Eurovision on her latest album dedicated to the Contest.

Having graced the stage in Stockholm back in 2000 with the UK's entry *Don't Play That Song Again*, Nicki is no stranger to the spectacle and showcases her vocal chops on a range of covers spanning its decades-long history.

Opening with a new version of her classic track, the record includes select edits from her 'Let's Play That Song Again' series of EPs, like the stellar dance rendition of Sweet Dreams' 1983 track *I'm Never Giving Up* and powerhouse version of Sergey Lazarev's electronic extravaganza *You Are The Only One*.

Covering a 45-year period, Eurovision staples like a bouncy take on Teach-In's 1975 classic *Ding A Dong*, sit comfortably alongside John Lundvik's 2019 entry *Too Late For Love* - one of two brand new recordings featured on the LP.

Also on offer is a Motown-inspired rendition of Belle and the Devotions' 1984 track *Love Games*, which brings its sound up to date with a refreshed production while carrying through the essence of the original recording.

That's what shines through across the album's 12 songs; Nicki and her collaborators Matt Pop and Pete Ware 'get' what Eurovision is all about and, rather than simply recreating the sounds of the originals, they inject new life into each recording for a 2023 audience.

Alongside the main album is a series of remixes, including extended versions of *Love Games*, *You're The Only One* and Bardo's 1982 hit *One Step Further*, plus a stunning, stripped back 'Candlelight' version of *Don't Play That Song Again*.

It's moments like this and a similarly lush version of *Go (Before You Break My Heart)* - originally performed as *Sì* by Gigliola Cinquetti in 1974 - that showcase Nicki's superb vocals and serve as a reminder that beneath the slick production is a powerhouse singer who has never missed a beat in three decades of performing.

Since appearing at Eurovision, Nicki has maintained her ties with the Contest and become one of the most recognisable faces and voices on the scene, and on her latest album she goes one step further in staging her own mini Eurovision with an eclectic selection of songs delivered by one standout performer. Douze points!

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

CROSS THE MERSEY

The Eurovision Grand Final will see a celebration of Liverpool's musical legacy - how well do you know the city's chart legacy?

1 Which Fab Four - who dominated the charts in the 1960s - became the best-selling music act of all time?

2 Sonia topped the charts in 1989 with *You'll Never Stop Me Loving You* after being picked up by which Liverpudlian producer?

3 She later became a TV mainstay, but which Liverpool lass started her career as a singer with hits like *Anyone Who Had A Heart* and *You're My World*?

4 Sugababes shot to the top of the charts with *Freak Like Me* after being joined by which blonde bombshell from Liverpool?

5 Holly Johnson fronted which eighties group that scored hits with *Relax* and *The Power of Love*?

6 Featuring the hit single *I Ran (So Far Away)*, which group scored a US Top 10 hit with their eponymous 1982 album?

7 Stock Aitken Waterman produced a Top 10 hit for which Liverpudlian sibling duo?

8 Nightmares in Wax and Dead or Alive starred which singer?

9 Fronted by Peter Hooton, which Liverpool-based band scored a 1990 hit with *All Together Now*?

10 After dominating the charts with the Spice Girls, which Merseyside singer scored a pair of solo No. 1s with *Never Be The Same Again* and *I Turn To You*?

11 Which Liverpudlian duo represented the UK at Eurovision 2003 with *Cry Baby*?

12 Formed in Liverpool, which band scored a UK No. 1 hit with *You To Me Are Everything* in 1976?

13 Before it became a massive hit for Amy Winehouse, which Liverpool band performed *Valerie*?

14 Which synth pop band, starring Andy McCluskey and Paul Humphreys, originally made a name for themselves on the Liverpool scene?

15 Natasha Hamilton and LizMcClarnon are members of which girl group?

16 Which funnyman scored a UK No. 1 hit in 1965 with *Tears*?

17 Fronted by Liverpool artists, which Stock Aitken Waterman-produced single raised money for those affected by the Hillsborough disaster?

18 Which 'X Factor' star's third album 'Lady Sings the Blues' celebrates the music of Billie Holiday?

19 Fronted by Julian Cope, which group had a 1981 Top 10 hit with *Reward*?

20 Hailing from Merseyside, which new wave group made their Top 10 debut in 1984 with *Wishful Thinking*?

ANSWERS: **1** The Beatles; **2** Pete Waterman; **3** Cilla Black; **4** Heidi Range; **5** Frankie Goes To Hollywood; **6** A Flock of Seagulls; **7** The Reynolds Girls; **8** Pete Burns; **9** The Farm; **10** Melanie C; **11** Jemini; **12** The Real Thing; **13** The Zutons; **14** OMD; **15** Atomic Kitten; **16** Ken Dodd; **17** Ferry Cross The Mersey; **18** Rebecca Ferguson; **19** The Teardrop Explodes; **20** China Crisis

PHOTO CRAIG EASTON

FOR THE RECORD

As her magnum opus 'Neon Nights' turns 20 with a massive celebratory reissue, **Dannii Minogue** revisits a defining era in early-noughties pop!

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

Back in 2001, Dannii Minogue had no plans for chart domination when she received an out-of-the-blue call from Pete Tong.

The legendary DJ was on the lookout for a vocalist for a new song from Dutch duo Riva and thought the Aussie superstar was the perfect fit to take *Who Do You Love Now?* global, with the track going on to dominate the club scene and impact the charts worldwide.

The release led to Dannii - who was then without a record contract - inking a deal with London Records for her fourth album, the game-changing 'Neon Nights', which is celebrating its 20th anniversary with a huge new reissue that's brought the classic era flooding back...

COME AND GET IT

"Sometimes you need that bushfire to clear the slate and regenerate," says the pop legend of the transition from her third album 'Girl' (1997) to 'Neon Nights' (2003). "We all get to know - when we've got enough years behind us - when you need to firmly shut a door for a very different one to open. It was like that. I was at peace with everything being finished and then this came as an unexpected surprise..."

The former album - Dannii's first in five years - saw her return with a club-oriented sound that proved a hit with fans worldwide, with singles *All I Wanna Do*, *Everything I Wanted* and *Disremembrance* achieving chart success and showcasing a more mature direction than her previous material, incorporating elements of dance and electronica. Despite receiving critical acclaim, its chart performance fell short of expectations and the singer was left without a recording contract as she embarked on the next chapter in her career.

However, things changed when the DJ supremo called and asked her to lend vocals to a new version of the instrumental track *Stringer* from disc jockey duo Zki and Dobri, aka Riva, with a view to impacting the clubs.

"I just thought, 'OK, my time here has passed'. 'Girl' was amazing and I felt like that was really where I found my feet, but I thought, 'OK, it's gone now'... And then there's one person who contacted me, which was Pete Tong," she beams. "I felt like I wasn't cool enough to be getting a call from Pete Tong. I thought if you were outside of the pop-loving world, I was uncool. But he said, 'Do you want to sing on this song, *Who Do You Love Now?*,' and I was really blown away, but also like, 'OK, do not get excited here, this is a one-off thing'. Because it really was just a vocal for a record."

That couldn't be further from the truth. "That record

> **"I was at peace with everything being finished and then this came as an unexpected surprise..."**

took me to Ibiza, then DJs were aware of me in a different way - even though I'd really been working on my remix packages since *Baby Love*, but I was still tarnished by this pop brush," she remembers. "Pete Tong was as big as he could be at that time and he just said, 'I dig you and I want you to do this vocal' - and that changed everything!"

Upon its November 2001 release, the track launched into the charts and reached No. 3 in the UK, spending a total of 15 weeks on the rundown and achieving the longest stay for any of her singles to date. Thanks to Tong, she was back in the global charts, but Dannii still has no idea why he selected her voice to appear on the single.

"I'd love to find out," she admits. "I reached out to him a couple of years ago, just before Covid, but we've never had that chance to sit down and really talk about it. He was just this God at the very helm of it all, but we never had that much contact. We never had that moment to have a conversation about it. But it would be awesome; it always is if you get to meet a person that was pivotal in a life-changing moment that they were maybe completely unaware of at the time.

"I always like to go on gut instinct and when you think something feels right, it probably is. Maybe that

"'Girl' was amazing and I felt like that was really where I found my feet."

was just it? I don't know if someone suggested my vocal to him... I've no idea how it happened!"

Who Do You Love Now? was released on Tong's FFRR label, which was then a part of London Records, who were impressed by the success of the single and signed Dannii for an album deal. The global acclaim for the release could have compelled her to stay firmly in that lane, but when it came to working on the LP she instead opted to fuse dance principles with pop sensibilities - a winning formula that characterises 'Neon Nights'.

While the lyrical content behind 'Girl' was personal and inspired by Dannii's divorce at the time, she relinquished much of the creative control with only a handful of writing credits on that record. This time around, she was an integral part of the process, putting her Queen of the Clubs title to good use and incorporating a sonic palette of influences across the album.

"I had no idea it was gonna turn into this album, which is so special and really had everything thrown at it, thanks to the energy of the record company," she reflects. "Phil Faversham doing A&R was just superb to work with - we were thick as thieves and it was a really good give-and-take. He would let the reins out and then rein me back in enough to make sure he got what he wanted, because if you give an artist as much lead as they want, they can end up very far away from where you want them to be."

> **I don't think 'The X Factor' would have come without the call from Pete Tong.**

ON THE LOOP

Armed with a heavy-hitting line-up of big name writers and producers - including Ian Masterson, Terry Ronald, Hannah Robinson, Savan Kotecha, Henrik Korpi, Matthias 'Blackcell' Johansson, Karen Poole and Jean-Claude Ades - Dannii began crafting an album that drew on dance floor styles and references from across the decades. Contemporary Europop characterises songs like *I Begin To Wonder* and hidden track *Come and Get It* (which appears after the one laidback number, *It Won't Work Out*), while there are elements of electro R&B in second single *Put The Needle On It* and *Creep*.

Meanwhile, her love of classic recordings is emphasised with interpolations of Tom Browne's *Thighs High (Grip Your Hips and Move)* on *Mighty Fine* and Laidback's *White Horse* on *Push*, and most notably on the 'bootleg' tracks from 'Neon Nights' - *Don't Wanna Lose This Groove* (a mash-up of *Don't Wanna Lose This Feeling* and Madonna's *Into The Groove*) and *Begin To Spin Me Around* (blending *I Begin To Wonder* and *You Spin Me Round (Like A Record)* from Dead Or Alive).

"I used to love listening to a lot of pirate radio stations and hearing a lot of that stuff that was unofficial, but the idea didn't come from me. It came from the producers Neïmo," she shares of the French production team, who also worked on *A Piece Of Time* and *On The Loop*. "They were young kids and they hadn't worked on a project like this; they did their own music, which was way more indie and alternative. So They didn't live through *Into The Groove*, but they knew I loved Madonna and they said, 'We've done this mash-up and probably nothing will ever happen with it, but it sounded cool to us,' and I was like, 'Oh my God, this is beyond surreal!'.

"So when I got back to London, I took it to London Records - which was part of Warner, and Madonna was on Warner - and they said, 'Let's ask if this could happen. If you don't ask, you don't get'," she smiles, noting that Madonna - who was at the time releasing her ninth album 'American Life' - was notoriously reserved when it came to signing off samples of her work. However, she gave approval for the track, including a vocal of the line *'Now I know you're mine'* from *Into the Groove (Dub)*, which was the first time Madonna had given permission for her work to be used in such a way.

Although she never heard back personally from the Queen of Pop, Dannii speculates: "You would think that the first time ever any of her stuff has been used, she's

across it. I would put my life on that. So we just asked and we got a 'Yes' - it was insane!" Of course, Madonna would go on to deliver a similar formula on *Hung Up*, which prominently features a sample from the instrumental introduction to ABBA's *Gimme! Gimme! Gimme! (A Man After Midnight)*.

It's a similar story for the Dead or Alive sample and Dannii admits that, two decades later, it's the bootleg mixes she comes back to time and time again: "I love them and they're the versions that I do live, because my muscle memory is doing those onstage."

Released in March 2003, 'Neon Nights' marked Dannii's return to the Top 10 of the UK Charts and delivered further hits with *Put The Needle On It*, *I Begin To Wonder* and *Don't Wanna Lose This Feeling*, all of which performed well across the continent and Down Under, where the record marked her return to the Top 40 for the first time in over a decade.

Even now, the memories leap out: "In the UK, it was 'Top of the Pops'. I had a pretty core group of dancers, great choreography, there was an extra lot of dancers that would swing in and out if someone wasn't available, and we toured the album all over Europe. There was definitely a big link with Ibiza; I'd do performances there for Radio One, live shows from Cafe Mambo on the tiniest stage that's the size of a stamp, then go to a club to do a performance at two, three or four in the morning. Getting the vibe of the island and the locals, and meeting the DJs, who were amazing.

"Then, when the songs were bubbling across Europe, I'd be in Paris, Brussels, or Germany. There were trips to Russia, which for some girl from Australia - which is right at the bottom of the Earth, next to a big block of ice with penguins on it - to go to the northern part of the Earth where if you go any further you'll hit a block

> **"I had no idea it was gonna turn into 'Neon Nights', which is so special and really had everything thrown at it."**

of ice with polar bears on it... It was just a surreal time, flying everywhere!"

She could have continued releasing material from the album, but the campaign came to an end following its fourth single and Dannii set about working on a new batch of songs, including the hit *You Won't Forget About Me*, which eventually featured on her follow-up 'Club Disco' (2007).

Why did she walk away from 'Neon Nights' at that point? "I put it all to bed once the record company had done with the singles. It's a confidence thing," admits Dannii. "I don't want to invest in something if not everyone puts their hand up and says, 'Yeah, we're gonna go for this'. Of course, I love everything

that I put out - I remember all the times in the studio, working with my friends and having a good time. So I can't trust myself with that; I have to wait for everyone else and then once everyone says, 'We're done with that album,' then I'm like, 'OK'."

VIBE ON

Two decades later, the 20th anniversary celebrations are an excuse to revisit the classic album in all its glory, while also spotlighting Dannii's club legacy with an epic 100+ track box set of the singles, including original remixes and new versions from Initial Talk, Project K, Luke Mornay and others. It also allowed the Aussie superstar to appreciate the significance of the era on her career going forward.

"When it's the first release of something and it's doing really well - which is what you want it to do - you're so busy doing all the promo that it kind of becomes a blur. Your brain goes into overload taking it all in," she shares. "So to be able to do this with friends and fans and people who worked on the album, with everybody giving me their recollections, it's like, 'Oh yeah, damn, that happened.' Without that, I wouldn't get to relive it.

"I don't think 'The X Factor' would have come without the call from Pete Tong. And then there's other stuff afterwards that wouldn't have happened if Simon Cowell didn't say, 'You should be on this show'."

It's a sense of destiny that's been present throughout her career, which will next year see Dannii, 51, mark 45 years in showbiz. "Even going back to my original big job in Australia, 'Young Talent Time', when Johnny Young called and said, 'I want you as part of the team'. I was like, 'Me? Are you sure you've got that right?'," she laughs. "They're just real pinch-me moments - so much fun - and they definitely did snowball onto the next thing. I guess you get an opportunity, you work hard, and if you've got a great team around you then you can create a platform and spring forward from there."

Throughout the years, Dannii has maintained close ties to the LGBTQ+ community and has been involved in a number of milestones which, decades on, have helped shape the fabric and culture of the scene.

> **I was like, 'Gay clubs are the most fun - I'm performing there,' because everyone who's there loves pop music!**

Among the notable moments, she was the first artist to release an official theme song for the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in with *Everlasting Night*, and the first major star to perform at London's G-A-Y nightclub.

As she prepares to return to UK TV screens for the upcoming BBC gay dating show 'I Kissed A Boy', she reflects: "I remember Jeremy [Joseph, G-A-Y owner] asking me to be the first performer at G-A-Y and it was at a time when people would not perform at a gay club because you'd be tarnished. There was no social media, you had no right of reply, and if you're going to perform there then the press were for sure gonna say, 'Oh, well, then they're gay,' and then you'd lose your career. So you were told not to do that.

"But I was like, 'Gay clubs are the most fun - I'm performing there,' because everyone who's there loves pop music and the energy is great. And I still do; to be able to go to different gay clubs around the world is just awesome and it's the music that unites everyone. So to go from the first performance there to the last performance at the original venue, which was just massive, and then to perform at Mardi Gras and do the first all-girl performance - there have been some really cool moments."

Dannii, who joined forces with Kylie earlier this year for a performance of *All The Lovers* at Sydney WorldPride, adds: "For me, it was never a tough or a big decision. There were a lot of people saying, 'This and this and this and this *could* happen,' but I'm gonna go and do it anyway. I'm going to be having fun, everyone's going to be having a good time, and then everyone else can make up what they want."

It was back in 2017 that Dannii released her most recent original single *Galaxy*, co-written by Sia and produced by Ian Masterson, marking the 20th anniversary of their earliest work together on 'Girl'. It's even longer since she released her last album back in 2007, but when asked about the possibility of returning to the studio with Masterson amid the buzz around 'Neon Nights 20', it's good news.

> **Ian Masterson and I *have* been working together via different hemispheres. There's something coming very soon...**

"Well, we *have* [been working together] via different hemispheres," she hints, teasing: "There's something coming very soon..." **RP**

● ***'Neon Nights 20' is out June 16 on London Records.***

PHOTOS MATTHEW DONALDSON

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WHOLE LO

TTA HISTORY

Success on 'Popstars: The Rivals' led to **Girls Aloud** becoming the UK's most successful girl group of the 21st century - a legacy that continues two decades on from the release of their debut album!

There are few acts that have managed to put their talent show beginnings behind them and dominate the charts as successfully as Girls Aloud.

Formed on November 30, 2002 in front of millions of 'Popstars: The Rivals' viewers, Cheryl Tweedy, Kimberley Walsh, Nicola Roberts, Nadine Coyle, and Sarah Harding released a stellar run of five albums from 2003 to 2008, and scored a massive 21 UK Top 10 singles.

Although the band has ruled out reuniting following Sarah's untimely death in 2021, we couldn't let the 20th anniversary of their debut album 'Sound Of The Underground' go by without taking a whistle-stop journey through the group's biggest hits and celebrating the legacy of one of the finest British girl bands in pop history...

SOUND OF THE UNDERGROUND

RELEASED: May 2003

THE SINGLES
- *Sound Of The Underground*
- *No Good Advice*
- *Life Got Cold*
- *Jump* (Reissue)

Following their formation on the ITV1 show Cheryl, Kimberley, Nadine, Nicola and Sarah entered the studio and quickly set to work recording their debut single *Sound Of The Underground*.

One of 60 songs written by Brian Higgins and his Xenomania with a view to launching a girl group, the track was inspired by Puretone's 1998 single *Addicted to Bass* and had previously been recorded by London girl group Orchid, who disbanded before ever releasing their version. Samantha Mumba also considered the song, but instead opted for *I'm Right Here* for her 2002 comeback, before Girls Aloud's manager Louis Walsh snapped it up for his new group.

Released just 16 days after their victory, it shot to the top of the charts and beat their rivals One True Voice to the Christmas No. 1 spot, eventually spending a month in that position and launching the most successful British girl group of the 21st century.

After the success of their debut, the girls waited five months before releasing its follow-up, returning in the spring of 2003 with *No Good Advice* - written by BriHigginsan and his Xenomania team in collaboration with Aqua's Lene Nystrøm Rasted - with a sound somewhere between Blondie and The Bangles. It went through numerous phases, originally laden with expletives and featuring a rave backing track, before emerging as Girls Aloud's sophomore release and proving an instant hit, peaking at No. 2.

That same month, the band released their debut LP, named after its lead single, with an impressive line-up of collaborators including Betty Boo, the Beatmasters, Graham Stack, Steve Anderson and Tim Kellett. It is their only album not to be entirely written and produced by Higgins and Xenomania, who only contributed two tracks to the initial running order, before he insisted on working on four additional songs - *Some Kind of Miracle*, *Life Got Cold*, *Stop* and *Love/Hate*.

Upon its release, 'Sound Of The Underground' peaked at No. 2 on the charts and a third single, *Life Got Cold*, was released over the summer, giving the girls a third consecutive Top 3 hit. Although well received, critics noted its similarities with Oasis' *Wonderwall* and Noel Gallagher later received a writing credit on the track.

Around the same time, Girls Aloud returned to the studio with the Xenomania team to work on three new songs: a cover version of Duran Duran's *Girls On Film* (which was the B-side of *Life Got Cold*), *You Freak Me Out* for the film 'Freaky Friday', and a cover version of The Pointer Sisters' *Jump* for the 'Love Actually' soundtrack. They also re-recorded *Some Kind Of Miracle* as a planned fourth single, but they eventually went with *Jump*, which peaked at No. 2 in the charts, and those plans were scrapped. However, all four songs appeared on a reissued version of the album, which was released in November

WHAT WILL THE NEIGHBOURS SAY?

RELEASED: November 2004

THE SINGLES
- *The Show*
- *Love Machine*
- *I'll Stand By You*
- *Wake Me Up*

Despite a run of four UK Top 3 hits, bosses at Polydor Records weren't convinced by Girls Aloud's performance the first time around and considered dropping them in early 2004.

Fortunately, the label's then-marketing director, Peter Loraine, convinced them to give the girls another shot and they soon reconvened in the studio with Higgins and Xenomania to work on tracks for their sophomore LP.

According to the group's main writer and producer, it was a condition of them staying with the label that Xenomania penned and produced the entirety of the record, which was recorded between April and September, with its lead single *The Show* arriving in June. Four songs were considered and the group wanted to go with *Wake Me Up*, but despite eventually

becoming its fourth single the track was deemed too much of a risk and *The Show* was chosen instead. Other options were *Graffiti My Soul* - which was previously offered to Britney Spears - and future B-side *Androgynous Girls*.

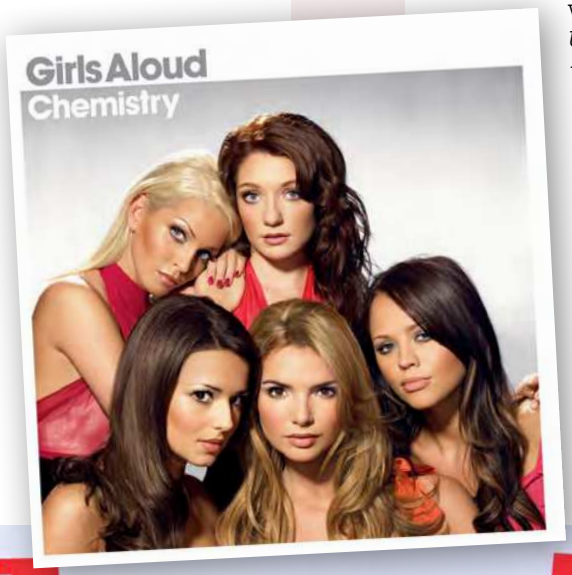
With elements of electro pop and Eurodance, *The Show* marked a shift in Girls Aloud's sound and continued their streak of hits, once again reaching No. 2 in the charts, while follow-up *Love Machine* - released in September - achieved a similar feat, this time incorporating elements of eighties synth pop and a rockabilly guitar line.

Although it soon became one of their signature songs, Girls Aloud were reluctant to release *Love Machine* as a single and instead thought *Deadlines & Diets* was the better choice. Despite their reservations, Polydor talked them around and the track became another chart hit, with Cheryl later admitting it taught them to listen to their label from time to time.

Before the album arrived in November, Girls Aloud released one more single; their cover of The Pretenders' *I'll Stand By You* was the 2004 Children in Need single and became Girls Aloud's second No. 1 on the UK Singles Chart, spending two weeks at the top. Originally reworked as a breakbeat track, Xenomania eventually scrapped the more experimental recording in favour of an updated version of the original arrangement - a move that clearly paid off.

Released later that month, 'What Will The Neighbours Say?' saw Girls Aloud diversify their sound and become more involved in the creative process, during which each member of the group co-wrote a track (Cheryl - *Big Brother*; Kimberley - *Thank Me Daddy*; Nadine - *100 Different Ways*; Nicola - *I Say a Prayer for You*; and Sarah - *Hear Me Out*).

The album peaked at No. 6 in the charts while its fourth and final single, *Wake Me Up*, hit No. 4 in February 2004 - ahead of the launch of Girls Aloud's first-ever tour that spring.



CHEMISTRY

RELEASED: December 2005

THE SINGLES

- *Long Hot Summer*
- *Biology*
- *See The Day*
- *Whole Lotta History*

A run of 21 shows didn't slow Girls Aloud down and it wasn't long before they were back with Xenomania working on tracks for their third studio album, with big plans for its lead single.

Released in August, *Long Hot Summer* was written while Higgins and co were in Los Angeles to meet with Disney, with a view for the song to be included on the soundtrack to the 2005 film 'Herbie: Fully Loaded'. The plans fell through and while its music video took inspiration from the movie, he later shared his disappointment with the single.

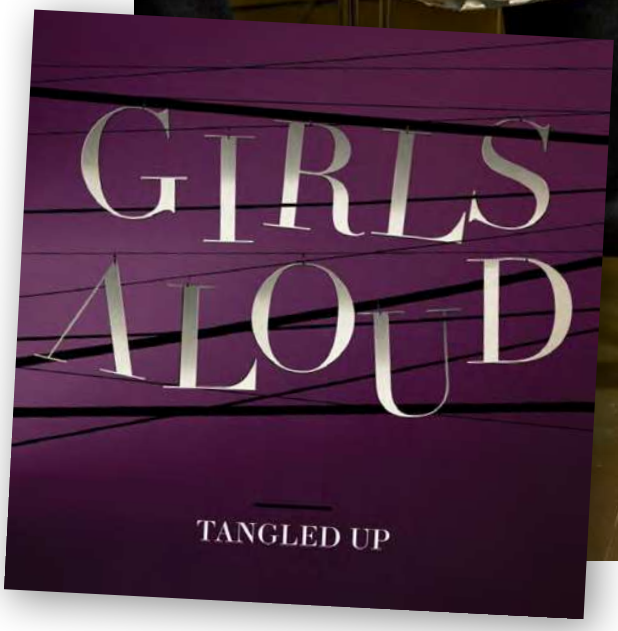
To make matters worse, *Long Hot Summer* peaked at No. 7 in the UK - becoming Girls Aloud's first single to miss the Top 5 - and they quickly set about recording a follow-up to get things back on track.

Arriving three months later, *Biology* - with its feelgood, uplifting beat and idiosyncratic structure - marked their return to the Top 5 and is widely considered as not only one of the group's finest moments, but also one of the best pop tracks of the decade. It inspired the title of the girls' third album, while the lyric referring to "wicked games" - over a sample of the main riff from The Animals' *Club A-Gogo* - alludes to the fact the five-piece almost released a cover of Chris Isaak's track of the same name.

The following month, Girls Aloud finally released their new record, which loosely explored life for the 20-somethings in London, and features some of their most celebrated album tracks like *Waiting* and *Swinging London Town*. Despite the acclaim, it stalled outside of the Top 10 - peaking at No. 11 - and remains their lowest-charting record, while third single, a cover of Dee C. Lee's *See The Day*, scraped into the Top 10 at No. 9.

Plans to recreate the success of *I'll Stand By You* fell short of expectations but the fourth and final single from the album, the original ballad *Whole Lotta History*, put up a stronger fight the following March and climbed to No. 6, ending the album campaign on a high.

Eighteen years on from its original release, another track from 'Chemistry' remains one of Girls Aloud's most-streamed releases; included as part of an additional disc of Christmas songs, *Not Tonight Santa* has become a holiday staple and in quietly releasing one of the sexiest seasonal hits of all time, they managed to sneak their way onto holiday playlists for decades to come. Pretty iconic, really...



TANGLED UP
RELEASED: November 2007

THE SINGLES
- *Sexy! No No No...*
- *Call The Shots*
- *Can't Speak French*

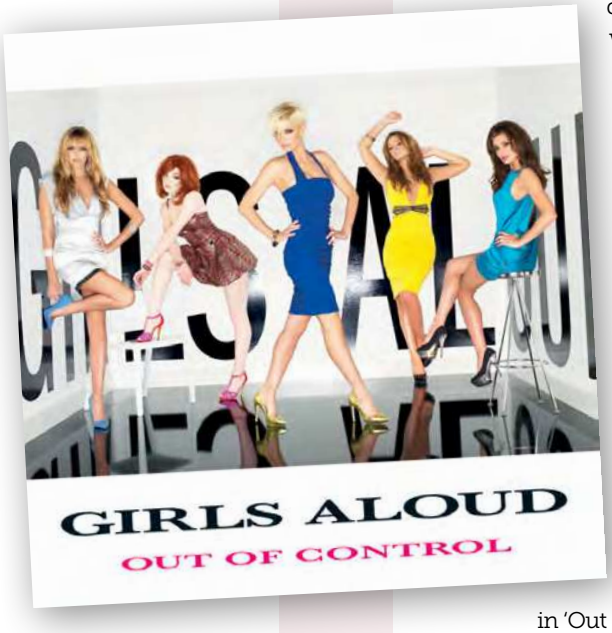
Having spent the past year celebrating their success to date with the group's

first Greatest Hits album, Girls Aloud returned in the summer of 2007 with a bold new sound that saw the matured five-piece adopt an EDM-influenced direction with the lead single from 'Tangled Up', *Sexy! No No No...*

Featuring a sample of Nazareth's 1975 song *Hair of the Dog*, the single marked a turning point for the group with its vocoder-heavy spoken intro and striking music video that sees the girls wearing latex catsuits and giant inflatable red dresses, with the song returning the group to the Top 5 of the Singles Chart.

It was the first and only preview of the album before its release in November, with the LP becoming Girls Aloud's first to not feature any of the members on its standard cover. Instead, it has the group's name and the album title hung on several long black rods in front of a purple background; however many have adopted the limited edition artwork - on which Cheryl, Kimberley, Nadine, Nicola and Sarah do appear - as the definitive version.

Once again, the record was met with widespread acclaim and is generally considered to be Girls Aloud and Xenomania's best work, owing to the number of potential singles, including *Close To Love* and *Girl Overboard*. It was opening number *Call The Shots* that was eventually chosen as the second single, though, arriving a week after its release, after sitting in their arsenal for over a year (it was originally considered as the lead track from 'The Sound Of Girls Aloud').



Peaking at No. 3, it was one of their best-performing singles in years and scooped the coveted Popjustice £20 Music Prize in 2008.

With so many options to choose from, the group could take their pick when it came to follow-ups, but only three singles were issued from 'Tangled Up', with *Can't Speak French* selected as the final track in March. Aptly packaged with the French-language version, *Je Ne Parle Pas Français*, and promoted with a fabulous visual featuring the girls in elaborate costumes inspired by Marie Antoinette and 18th century French fashions, the song served as the theme to the band's latest TV series, 'The Passions of Girls Aloud', and was another Top 10 hit for the five-piece.

Although no more singles were released, Girls Aloud continued to promote the record with a 35-date tour of UK and Ireland from May through August, including a massive 24 arena shows and 11 open-air concerts. Receiving positive reviews with costume comparisons to Madonna's 'Blond Ambition World Tour', they were joined on the road by Fascination labelmates The Saturdays, who made their chart debut that summer with *If This Is Love*.

OUT OF CONTROL
RELEASED: October 2008

THE SINGLES
- *The Promise*
- *The Loving Kind*
- *Untouchable*

It was while on tour for 'Tangled Up' that the group started work on their fifth album, with sessions continuing through the summer and reflecting their newfound superstar status after five years in the charts.

According to Higgins, the focus was less on creating "highbrow" pop and more on delivering commercial anthems that aligned with what was happening in the mainstream, with its title inspired by the group's seemingly unstoppable success and determination to have a good time with it.

While continuing to channel the maturity of their previous release, 'Out Of Control' leans heavily into the sounds of the sixties and eighties, with lead release *The Promise* and follow-up *The Loving Kind* examples of the diversity of the tracks on offer.

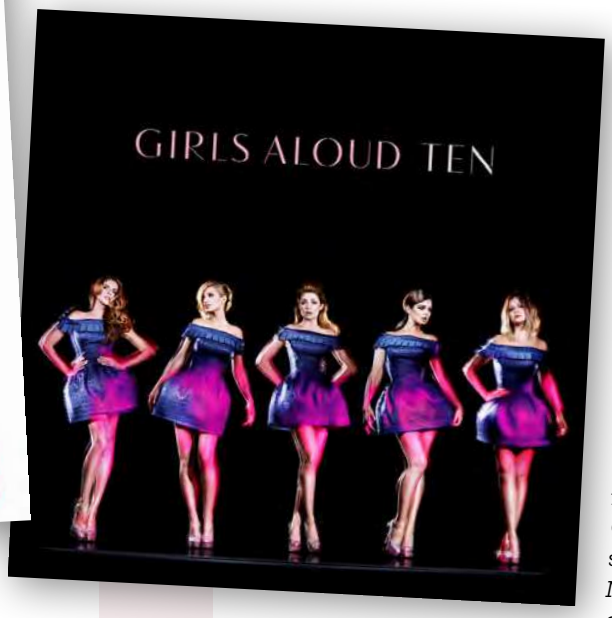
Arriving two weeks ahead of the album, *The Promise* pays homage to Phil Spector's famous Wall of Sound and in its video, the girls are seen at a drive-in movie theatre, where they watch themselves performing as a sixties girl group on screen. It was a hit formula that took Girls Aloud back to the top of the UK charts with their first solo No. 1 single in four years, resulting in 'Out Of Control' becoming their first and to-date only chart-topping studio album and one of the best-selling of the year, despite its October release.

In January, they returned with the second single from the album, *The Loving Kind*, which was written as a collaboration between Pet Shop Boys and Xenomania and intended for inclusion on the duo's 2009 album 'Yes'. Both parties had previously agreed there would be just three co-written songs on the album, and having noticed Chris Lowe's "slight reticence" towards the song, Higgins suggested that Girls Aloud record it instead.

Channelling Pet Shop Boys' signature melancholy, the track continued Girls Aloud's six-year Top 10 streak and was met with critical acclaim, leading to the release of a third and final single, *Untouchable*, to coincide with the launch of the group's arena tour that spring.

A trance-inspired ballad, the song clocks in at an epic 6.42 on the album, but was edited down to just 3.49 for radio, much to the dismay of fans who cited *Untouchable* as one of Girls Aloud's strongest tracks.

PHOTOS IAN BARTLETT, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



Despite rave reviews and a glossy visual inspired by Stanley Kubrick's film '2001: Space Odyssey', it stalled at No. 11 in the charts, becoming the band's first single to miss out on the Top 10.

In February, Girls Aloud signed a new record deal with Fascination that would see the group release another three studio albums, but in July they announced a planned year-long hiatus and despite returning in 2012 to celebrate their 10th anniversary, it remains the final album from the band.

THE SOUND OF GIRLS ALOUD & TEN

RELEASED: October 2006 & November 2012

THE SINGLES

- *Something Kinda Ooooh* ('06)
- *I Think We're Alone Now* ('06)
- *Something New* ('12)
- *Beautiful 'Cause You Love Me* ('13)

When 'Chemistry' underperformed on the charts, rumours were rife that Girls Aloud would split - but the group had no plans of going anywhere and were keen to showcase their singles success so far with their first compilation release.

'The Sound Of Girls Aloud' features their 12 singles to that point, along with three new tracks: *Something Kinda Ooooh*, *Money* and a cover of Tommy James and the Shondells's 1967 single *I Think We're Alone Now*. It was originally set to feature a cover of *What A Feeling* from the film 'Flashdance', but Girls Aloud contacted the record label three days ahead of its manufacturing deadline with the idea of doing *I Think We're Alone Now* instead.

It became the second single from the record, after *Something Kinda Ooooh*, with both peaking in the UK Top 5, and the album itself gave Girls Aloud their first No. 1.

Six years later, the group reunited to mark the 10th anniversary of their 'Popstars: The Rivals' win, returning with the Children in Need single *Something New* as the first taste of original material from their second compilation, the aptly-titled 'Ten'.

Consisting of 14 of Girls Aloud's singles, 'Ten' features four new tracks, including *Every Now And Then*, *On The Metro* and *Beautiful 'Cause You Love Me* - its second and final single, produced by Jim Eliot, making it the group's first non-collaborative single to not be produced by Higgins and Xenomania. It peaked at No. 97.

After touring the album, Girls Aloud went their separate ways, performing their final gig together on March 20, 2013.

SUGABABES VS GIRLS ALOUD
WALK THIS WAY

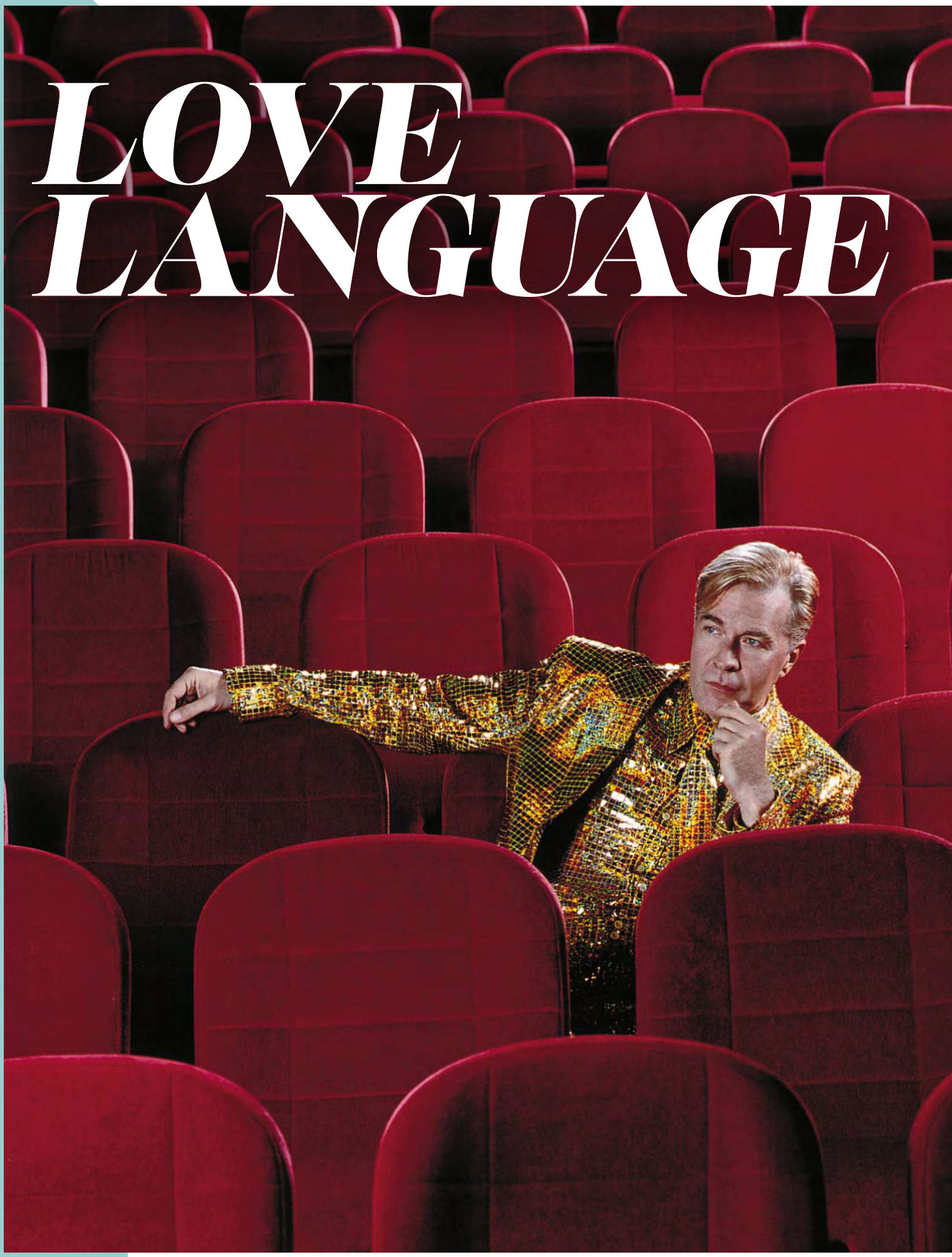
RELEASED: March 2007

Girls Aloud teamed up with Sugababes at the request of Comic Relief co-founder and trustee Richard Curtis, who had the idea for two of the country's most popular and successful girl groups to join forces on a powerhouse charity anthem.

Options including Blur's *Girls & Boys* and Candi Staton's *You Got the Love* were considered, before Aerosmith's 1975 track was selected and recorded by both groups.

Released in the spring, the track was produced by Dallas Austin and is one of only two singles from Girls Aloud to not be produced by Higgins and Xenomania.. It peaked at No. 1 in the charts and even reached the Top 10 on the Billboard European Hot 100 Singles rundown.

LOVE LANGUAGE



Forty years on from their chart-topping debut, **ABC**'s 'The Lexicon of Love' is the subject of a new live album that sees Martin Fry and co at their very best!

WORDS SIMON BUTTON

Making a live album has always been an ambition of ABC's Martin Fry - and what better way to celebrate 40 years of the group's seminal debut than to bring 'The Lexicon of Love' to life on stage with a full concert orchestra?

Released in 1982, the LP took the band to the top of the UK charts, made waves globally, and delivered the hit singles *Tears Are Not Enough*, *Poison Arrow*, *The Look of Love* and *All of My Heart*.

In celebration of its latest milestone, they toured the record last year and performed a special show on June 21 - the anniversary of its release - which was recorded for ABC's first-ever live album.

POISON ARROW

"I'm a huge fan of them," the flamboyant frontman says of such recordings. "I loved Bowie's 'David Live' and even went to the Tower Theatre in Philadelphia to see where he'd recorded it. And the concert album 'Get Yer Yah-Yahs Out!' was the first record I ever bought by the Rolling Stones."

Also taking pride of place in Fry's record collection are The Who's 'Live At Leeds' and James Brown's 'Live At The Apollo', but as he notes: "The live album has sort of gone out of vogue."

Leave it to Martin, then, to buck the trend with 'The Lexicon of Live', which was captured at the band's orchestra-backed show at Sheffield City Hall. "We'd been playing so many shows with [conductor] Anne Dudley and the South Bank Sinfonia and it was really gelling," he reflects, "so it felt like a good way to document what we'd been up to over the last couple of years.

"It felt like a live recording was destiny," Martin adds of that memorable night in a venue that is dear to the Sheffield native's heart. The first time he played there was in his initial band Vice Versa back in the late-seventies, prior to which he'd seen loads of bands in both the ballroom and main hall.

"I saw people like The Ramones, Talking Heads and Blondie, all on the same bill," he recalls. "What a package that was. In my bohemian days I used to drink in the Wapentake bar opposite and if a show at City Hall wasn't sold out a guy would come in and go, 'Do you want some tickets?'"

The live album hasn't been tweaked: "It was a pretty sophisticated show, although there are moments where it goes a little out-of-tune. But I didn't want to get into edits and tweaks, and it's the same song order - with the overture, *When Smokey Sings*, running through that part of the catalogue, intermission, then 'The Lexicon of Love' in its entirety.

> ***I looked out into the audience and I could see how much the songs from the original album meant to people.***

"It was a magical night and everything went great, apart perhaps from a couple of fluffed lyrics. The audience was phenomenal. Those songs came from Sheffield in a way, definitely with the 'Lexicon of Love' stuff, and it was a very confident performance so we decided to document it rather than recording 12 shows or something and editing them together."

Always a garrulous interviewee, he laughs. "I talk a lot, as you can tell, and

I was probably rambling a bit with the patter between the songs. We edited out a few bits of that to keep it punchy but otherwise it's the show as it happened."

The landmark album is done in sequential order, although it ends with *All of My Heart* instead of *4 Eva 2 Gether*. For the live shows, Fry switched those two songs around so as not to end on a pre-encore downer. "It feels like a great way of walking down the Yellow Brick Road into the horizon," is his florid explanation for that.

Getting to sing with a full orchestra behind him was a dream come true. "It's phenomenal. It's like having a Learjet behind you," he gleams. The man who is now essentially ABC, drafting in other musicians as and when needed, continues: "The band I've worked with for a long time now is incredible. But when you can feel the air moving as the violins are bowing, the cellos are playing and the kettle drums are banging... It's amazing! There's a lot of energy on stage. I've never done a headcount but I think it's a 36-piece orchestra and an eight- or nine-piece band, so it's close to 50 people on stage as well as Anne, of course, who makes it all happen.

"The original album wasn't as heavily-laden with strings as people might think. *All of My Heart* was and there's a bit of that on *The Look of Love*. So it took a long time to marry the material to the set-up with the orchestra. I've seen a lot of orchestral shows on TV where the band gets swamped a bit or they're like the cherries on the blancmange. Anne was fantastic with the arrangements, making sure we had something fresh to say with the material. There's a chintzy, schmaltzy route you can take. You have to find the right balance."

He grins: "I should add that it's still pomp and circumstance, though. It's ABC on steroids. That's another reason to put the album out because it's a panoramic version of the songs."

ALL OF MY HEART

A live recording might not be on-trend, but going against the grain is nothing new for Fry. ABC's 1982 debut album had a cinematic, lush, romantic sweep at a time when pop was more synthesised. "We were aiming for that Las Vegas feel with emotionally exaggerated music and lyrics," he muses. The idea was to make a pop opera where the songs climax, they finish, they don't fade out."

The album's sound was influenced by Motown and Stax and bands like The Temptations. "It was inspired by the sort of polish you got from all those great records from the sixties. Basically we went in the opposite direction to everyone else," he adds. "I liked bands like Joy Division but we wanted people to feel like those bands were matt and we were gloss, like walking into a showbusiness emporium. We wanted to create a world that was larger than life. We were colour in a world that was mostly grey. It was about walking in a different direction to the prevailing mood and doing something original."

> ***If there can be 37 episodes of 'Breaking Bad', why can't there be another episode of 'The Lexicon of Love'?***

Then there was the spiffy image, which came about from rummaging through jumble sales. "We had no money so we'd pick up tweed suits that once belonged to some old dear's husband or formal gear that wasn't fashionable anymore, like long raincoats and hats," laughs Fry. "It was about wanting to be in a movie and wanting to escape reality, being in something like 'The 39 Steps'. It was a radical thing to do, sitting in some old pub in some dinner jacket you'd got from a jumble sale."

When asked why he feels 'The Lexicon of Love' is still beloved by the fans, Martin says: "Whenever I'm asked that I try and say something that makes me sound intelligent. But everybody's had a broken heart and can relate to the universal themes. Then it's Trevor Horn's luscious production. Yet there's something else that locks it all together because more than 40 years later people still hold the album dear to their hearts, just as I hold Bowie's 'Ziggy Stardust' and Marvin Gaye's 'What's Going On' to mine. The collection of songs on 'Lexicon' genuinely has a life of its own."

MANY HAPPY RETURNS

The same couldn't really be said for the follow-up 'Beauty Stab' (1983); whereas 'The Lexicon of Love' topped the UK charts, the second album reached No. 12 - actually not a bad placing, but the heavier rock sound divided devotees.

"It would have been interesting if Trevor had worked on that one too," Martin muses, "but he was busy elsewhere. And it was a bit like Frankie

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

> ***It's still pomp and circumstance. It's ABC on steroids.***

Goes to Hollywood making 'Liverpool' after 'Welcome to the Pleasuredome' - some of the fire had gone out. Sonically, it's not as good as 'The Lexicon of Love' and it's not finished, really. The paint's still wet on that one."

He's prouder of 1985's 'How to Be a... Zillionaire!' because the title track and *Be Near Me* both did well in the States. "The record company didn't like it and they didn't like the look of it, the cartoon imagery and all that, but is sustained us in America."

'Alphabet City' (1987) returned them to UK chart glory with the now-classic *When Smokey Sings* and the Chic-inspired *The Night You Murdered Love*. It felt like a course correction towards a poppier sound. "But then with ABC the idea was always to tack into the wind. It was like a yacht across the sea, where changing direction and going left and then right was a core part of the band."

Prior to the recording sessions, the singer struggled with Hodgkin's Disease. "I'd been really ill and I kind of came out of the chemo wards and the radiotherapy as if I was climbing out of the rubble," he recalls. "It was about using 'Let's do what we do best' as a template. It was about finding some solid ground again."

Subsequent albums like 'Up' (1989), 'Abracadabra' (1991), 'Skyscraping' (1997) and 'Traffic' (2008) all underperformed, but 2016's unexpected sequel 'The Lexicon of Love II' saw Fry and co back in the Top 5.

He chuckles: "I mean, 1983 would have been the right time but it did very well. For years I'd been avoiding the idea but after doing an orchestral show at the Royal Albert Hall I looked out into the audience and I could see and feel how much the songs from the original album meant to them.

"They'd been through a time capsule like I had of, you know, kids growing up, failed marriages, businesses falling apart, shit happening to them, and yet there they were singing along. It was like, 'Wouldn't it be interesting to see what was happening to them now as elder statesmen?' and that's where the germ of the idea for 'The Lexicon of Love II' came from."

It was originally called 'The Lexicon of a Lost Ideal' until someone at the record company heard the tracks and suggested the eventual title. "If they'd suggested that at the beginning, I'd never have finished it because it would have been too intimidating. But I embraced the idea, like 'If there can be 37 episodes of 'Breaking Bad', why can't there be another episode of 'The Lexicon of Love'?'"

As regards a 40th anniversary reissue of the first studio album, Martin reckons: "The reissue will show up some time if Universal have anything to do with it. I've done an Atmos mix so that will appear some time soon, I imagine."

He grins again: "A guy told me that there was a 40th anniversary of something Pete Townsend was doing but it came out on the 42nd anniversary, two years later than it should have done. These things always seem to take an extra two years..." **RP**

● ***The Lexicon of Love Live is out on May 19 on Live Here Now Recordings.***

RE-INVENTION

More than two decades into her record-releasing career, **Alison Goldfrapp** re-emerges with her first-ever solo album - a project that celebrates "the power of music and pleasure"...

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

For over 20 years, Goldfrapp have been at the forefront of British pop and have delivered some of the finest synth records of the 21st century.

With Will Gregory, the duo's namesake frontwoman scored hits such as *Ooh La La*, *Number 1* and *A&E*, among others, but now she's taking a bold step forward with the release of her first-ever solo album, 'The Love Invention'.

As Alison Goldfrapp prepares to finally unveil the record - an electronic journey through the mind of the pop auteur - she goes behind the music and reveals why now is the time to finally unleash the long-awaited project.

ELECTRIC

"It feels like a new time, and a new era," says Alison, reflecting on her reemergence and the birth of a new career. "I feel very strong."

Across seven albums, Goldfrapp delivered consistently with a sound that bucked chart trends in favour of freshness and originality - something that, once again, Alison leans into on her own material, which exists in its unique sphere with an overarching air of freedom and euphoria.

"I wanted to do something that had that very clubby, acid-y feeling to it," she explains of the album's lead single, *So Hard So Hot*. "But I wanted lightness to come out of the chorus – there's tension there, as well as euphoric freedom."

That track was recorded in the British heatwave during the summer of 2022 and was "simultaneously a comment on the climate and it has a sexual connotation". Alison adds: "We had that ballistic spell, and it was kind of revolting and brilliant at the same time. I was loving that feeling, so that chorus just flew out of my mouth."

It's an instinct that developed over the near-three-decades Alison has spent working in the music industry; in 1994, she featured on the Orbital album 'Snivilisation' and collaborated with trip reggae outfit Dreadzone on *The Good* and *The Bad*. In the years that followed, she worked with trip hop artist Tricky and composer Stefan Girardet, before meeting Will in 1999 and inking a deal with Mute Records.

For 'The Love Invention', she collaborates with Richard X and James Greenwood across 11 tracks that realise her creative vision; and when it comes to her choice in partnerships, nothing happened by chance. "I'm a bit of a sponge, and a magpie in a sense," Alison explains. "A person's energy in the room will have a huge effect on me, and the way I respond to things.

"I love listening to new things, new energy, new sounds, new ways of thinking. I wanna grow and develop, and try out new things all the time. So that's why you've gotta be with people."

> "I WANTED TO CELEBRATE THE POWER OF MUSIC AND PLEASURE... IT'S ABOUT WANTING TO FEEL THAT FREEDOM!"

Although collaborative at its core, there's a striking independence that radiates throughout the record as Alison takes the creative reins. A long time coming, the journey began back in 2021 when she was approached by Norwegian electronic duo Röyksopp to collaborate on two tracks for their seventh album 'Profound Mysteries', which led to the joint single *Impossible* and encouraged the writer and vocalist to explore the creative process further, outside of the familiarity of Goldfrapp.

At first it was "a bit weird", but having built a studio in her east London home Alison soon found her creative rhythm. "I really enjoyed it," she says, adding of her studio space: "I often fantasise I'm

in this huge vista, and it's always sunny, with huge skies. I'm not in this room when I'm in this room. It's the portal.

"It was really important to me to work more independently," adds Alison. "I set up this room with a load of equipment, and it got me into a groove. Being in this room with just my engineer enabled me to indulge in a way that I hadn't done before. I love listening to vocals with lots of harmonies — stacks of vocals — and I had fun doing that. It's all my voice on the album; it's a lot of work."

DIGGING DEEPER

The makeshift studio in which Alison recorded 'The Love Invention' is something of a full circle moment; formed in 1999, Goldfrapp recorded their debut LP 'Felt Mountain' in a rented bungalow in the Wiltshire countryside over a six-month period, beginning in the September and running through the winter, into the following year.

Released a full 12 months after its conception, following the spring single *Lovely Head*, the album was a spectrum of styles, from electronica to ambient and trip hop, and while it peaked at No. 57 in the charts, the LP was met with widespread acclaim and shortlisted for the 2001 Mercury Prize.

Over the years that followed, the duo scaled the charts, making their Top 20 debut with 2003's 'Black Cherry' before achieving commercial success with 'Supernature' (2005) and 'Seventh Tree' (2008) - both of which peaked at No. 2 and delivered the hit singles *Ooh La La* and *Number 1*, and *A&E*, respectively.

Her star continued to rise as Goldfrapp received multiple BRIT and Grammy nominations and an Ivor Novello for *Strict Machine*, with Alison later broadening her artistic horizons, serving as art director and photographer for the artwork for their 2017 album 'Silver Eye', while the duo also scored the critically-acclaimed films 'My Summer of Love' and 'Nowhere Boy'.

It's a multi-format approach to creativity that continues through to her latest project, which is accompanied by a series of video vignettes, directed in collaboration with Mat Maitland of Big Active, that have been treated with a range of AI techniques to create extreme fluctuations on a spectrum that glides towards radical fantasy. The result is

PHOTOS MAT MAITLAND

a mythical world that is both powerful and fragile, in which Alison features as a solo figure dissolving in and out of geological gridded realms, her face oscillating between an enhanced reality and contorted fictions.

It's a universe that's also represented in the artwork for the album and its singles, with Alison explaining: "I wanted it to be really colourful and vibrant. It's a fantastical version of me." That in itself is another example of her cohesive approach, with the record often presenting an exaggerated representation of the singer and songwriter, particularly on songs like *Subterfuge*, on which she cut up and looped spliced vocal tracks. "I was playing around with a lot more synthetic sounds," she explains. "I've always loved playing with more robotic sounds of my vocals, but I felt like I was upping it a notch."

NEVER STOP

'The Love Invention' represents a bold new chapter in Alison's career and if ever there was a sign that's she's doing things on her own terms, it's the rollout that saw her drop remixes of *Digging Deeper* and *Fever*, courtesy of Claptone and Paul Woolford, respectively, before even announcing the album.

While remixes usually appear later in the process, it was a conscious decision to bring them forward and make them an integral part of the album's universe and a key aspect of the campaign. "For this album I wanted to make sure the collaborations were not a later, add-on part of the process," she affirms. "I really wanted them to be an inherent part of the album and what we're doing. They feel very important."

It's that kind of autonomy that allowed her to also channel her own musical preferences - specifically a penchant for disco, and artists such as Sylvester, Donna Summer, and Chic - into the material. "It was never 'cool' to like that sort of thing when I was a teenager," she says. "But I was really into it."

Conversely, the record references the eighties and acts like Talking Heads, of whom she's also a fan. "I love David Byrne's mantra-like beats," she shares. "*Once In A Lifetime* is one of my all-time favourite songs. It felt like a really important questioning of being human. That, along with the disco music that I loved, has really stayed with me.

"There's something about that sentiment that's so deep," Alison adds. "And also there's something very basic about wanting to dance. If those two things can work together, it's perfection to me."

> **I LOVE LISTENING TO NEW THINGS, NEW ENERGY, NEW SOUNDS, NEW WAYS OF THINKING. I WANNA GROW AND DEVELOP, AND TRY OUT NEW THINGS ALL THE TIME.**

There's something to be said for her knack for crafting a record that draws on influences dating back 50+ years while managing to sound so strikingly current - a testament to Alison's innate instincts as a creator to look beyond trends and instead create a world for her art to exist in. Now in her 50s, discovering such liberation has been game-changing.

"I'm very interested in our obsession with pleasure and desire, and how that changes as you get older," Alison says. "We like to think that only young people feel desire! We're living in a world where there's way more older people — and your need for desire doesn't go just because you're older. I am a female of a certain age, and I think we're made to feel like we shouldn't talk about stuff like that."

On what 'The Love Invention' as a whole represents, she reflects: "I wanted to celebrate the power of music and pleasure, and this other force that is there in you. It's about wanting to feel that freedom, which I don't know if I have expressed before." **RP**

● ***The Love Invention is out May 12 on Skint.***

LISTEN UP MY PEOPLE

Returning with her first new material in eight years, **V V Brown** has plenty to say as she launches her latest project 'Black British'.

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

When V V Brown made her Top 40 debut in 2009 with *Shark In The Water*, she was no stranger to the music industry.

Having signed to Polydor Records when she was just 16 years old, the singer-songwriter released her first single *Whipped* in 2006 but was shelved by the label and had to start over, jumping ship to Island Records for her debut LP 'Travelling Like The Light' (2009).

In the years that followed, she exited the major label machine and launched YOY Records, under which she released her second and third albums - 'Samson & Delilah' (2013) and 'Glitch' (2015) - before taking a break from music to start a family.

After teasing new material earlier this year, she's finally back with *Black British*, offering a first taste of her comeback record.

TRAVELLING

"Oh, my God, it's been so long. It feels like I'm a completely different person," laughs the musician of her long-awaited return. "I feel really grateful as well, because to be able to make music is always something that you should be grateful for. To do anything that you love to do is a really great way to live."

Her most recent project saw V V embark on an electronic path and planted the seed for her latest release; a multi-format endeavour that will "combine the medium of essay writing and journalism" with music and tackles themes of identity and independence.

"The last video that I did before I concentrated on motherhood was a song called *Sacrifice*, where I dressed up as a white woman and had to take off this white mask. It was all about identity and the concept of dual consciousness," she explains, referring to a sociological idea of individuals that hold two contradictory sets of beliefs at the same time. "I started to dive in a bit deeper sociologically and wanted to go more down that direction. I think, if I had maybe not got pregnant, I would have continued that journey of exploration of sociology and music. So when I came

> **THIS ALBUM IS SO MUCH MORE THAN MUSIC. I WANT TO HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH SOCIETY.**

back, it was a natural next step to continue questioning society and being really honest and open and bold and brave about those questions."

The lead track, *Black British*, embodies the themes of the record, which was conceived during the Covid-19 pandemic and on the back of the Black Lives Matter movement, which compelled V V to revisit the ideas she'd floated four years prior and get back on track with new material.

"It really affected me and what I wanted to do as an artist, because I really didn't want to compromise anymore; I really wanted to show my real, true, authentic side that a lot of the time was hidden in major labels, where you couldn't say those things because it was all about selling records and not upsetting people," she reflects. "I'm such a huge fan of pop music - even though this record isn't necessarily pop - and I love when you can find intelligent ways to communicate things through pop. I tried to do that with songs like *Crying Blood* or *Everybody* or *The Apple*. If you listen to my lyrics, they're always kind of political. But I got to a point in my life where I was like, 'I don't want to have to put these subtle political messages in my music. I'm just gonna just let it all come out'. It feels really authentic."

In the years since she last released music, there have been numerous changes, both in the industry and personally for V V, who is now a mum to two young daughters and admits that although her return was spurred on by a desire to speak out about the world around her, she's "scared" to put herself back in the spotlight.

"I love art, I love music, and I love creating - but I've always felt a bit awkward with the whole fame side of things. I've never been very good at that game," she sighs. "And I realised during Covid that I suffer heavily from anxiety and depression, that I now have medication for, but it's something that I think I've had the whole time. So that aspect of it is a bit scary, because I've lived quite a private life in the countryside with my family and I've really enjoyed that side of it, where you don't have to be in front of anybody."

However, she maintains: "When I had my children, everything around me became so much more real. My priorities completely shifted and changed and I looked at the world in this new, magical way where there was no room to be inauthentic anymore. I've given birth to two children that came out of my vagina; the fact that I was able to do that just made me feel like a warrior and I 100 per cent started to think about it through the eyes of how I want my children to live in the world and what I could do to try and change it."

> **"I USED TO FEEL EMBARRASSED BY MY CATALOGUE. I USED TO LOOK AT OTHER ARTISTS AND WISH THAT I HAD A TIDY, CONSISTENT SOUND."**

BACK IN TIME

Starting out in the industry as a teenager, V V spent much of her formative years honing her craft behind the scenes before ever releasing music commercially. "I remember PopJustice before it even had a website," she laughs. "It was literally a forum... Mad!"

V V continues: "I had a whole life before *Shark In The Water*; a whole hidden career before I came up like a mole from my burrow. But I was there all the time, working hard, trying to release music and trying to find myself as an artist as well. Because I was so young - I didn't even know who I really was back then."

With more than 25 years under her belt, she admits there's a new sense of freedom when it comes to releasing material. "I think you get to a point where you just feel really relaxed and you don't have those same expectations. I think you have a lot more humility about the process," she reflects. "I've also created a life for myself away from music. Throughout my 20s and my early 30s, everything was about music, but now I've got kids and a home and a husband and a routine, and other small businesses and things that I do, so music isn't the centre of the universe in the same way. Although it's my job and my love, there's a balance, and that 25-year journey has led to real peace and balance."

That doesn't mean all aspects of the job come naturally and when it comes to social media V V laughs: "I'm terrible at it!" However, she isn't one to shy away from sparking a debate, having recently caused a buzz with the cover for the *Black British* single, which shows her leaning over a Union Jack flag as her skin melts away into a pool of whiteness.

She encouraged followers to share their reactions in the comments and, discussing the mixed response to the artwork, the artist insists: "I love when people have opinions and I think that art is supposed to provoke a debate. I think it should provoke opinions. So if someone says something mean, I embrace it as part of art and culture, because without *that* person saying they hate it, then *that* person saying they love it, it's kind of boring.

"It's really important to have those comments and to have that polarised spectrum," she elaborates. "So I'm really unafraid of how it will be received - because how it will be received is how it will be received. For me, I never release anything unless I'm happy with it and then I let it go, so even if the whole world hates it, I like it - and I'm cool with that."

It's something she hopes will continue throughout the campaign for the new record, on which "every moment is a moment to debate, to talk, to challenge, to make you feel uncomfortable, to ask yourself questions, to ask what it means, to make you feel grossed out, or confused, or even insulted sometimes".

"The artwork did provoke a lot of that and I will explain what it means in an essay soon," she adds. "In this six year period, I really developed a voice with my writing and for me, this album is so much more than

"I'VE ALWAYS FELT A BIT AWKWARD WITH THE WHOLE FAME SIDE OF THINGS. I'VE NEVER BEEN VERY GOOD AT THAT GAME."

music. I want to have a conversation with society; I want you to talk with me, and I talk with you. I want us to feel and to be honest and open every step of the way. That is what this album is going to try and do. It's an essay, it's a 12 track essay."

EVERYBODY

Academia runs in V V's blood; born in Northampton as the eldest of six siblings to a Jamaican mother and Puerto Rican father - both educators - the musician sat her A-levels a year early, achieved four A-grades and received offers to study law at five universities, including Oxford.

She may have pursued her passion for music, but the hitmaker admits: "I've been holding it back for so long: I am a nerd! I'm a bookworm, I am the awkward person in a club who would be dancing with a guy and ask him, 'So, what's the meaning of life?' I find it really difficult to chit chat; I love diving in deep."

Having the freedom to channel that through her music is a gift she was afforded in becoming an independent artist, although the new LP will be released through her own label in

"THE INDUSTRY HAS CHANGED SO MUCH FROM WHEN I LEFT; IT'S A WHOLE DIFFERENT UNIVERSE NOW."

collaboration with Universal, marking her return to a major label for the first time in over a decade. "I never ever thought that I would ever go back to a major," she smiles. "So it's my label partnered with Virgin Music under Universal, and it's a really nice feeling to be partnered with a major that is encouraging it and understanding the direction."

She adds: "The industry has changed so much from when I left; it's a whole different universe now and it's really refreshing to see how artists are having more of a creative voice. I love it. I think it's great how bold artists are being and how independent and powerful they are. Like RAYE, for instance - I just think she's awesome for the way that she's navigated through her career, even though she'd had a hard time. There's so much power in the hands of artists now."

It's a development that led to a more diverse generation of up-and-coming artists rising through the pop ranks, thanks in part to social media allowing creatives a platform to curate their content and build fan bases without having to rely on expensive PR. As V V notes, it's a step in the right direction, but there are still issues with the representation of Black artists in the music industry today.

"If you look statistically at the shelf life of Black artists through time in this country, you will find that there's one every year that they hail. One comes in, one comes out. One comes in, one comes out. It's Corinne Bailey Rae, then it's me, then it's Laura Mvula, then it's Cat Burns," she says. "There's a sense of a tokenistic hailing of one Black female artist, because you look around to your white counterparts in the UK and there'll be many of them.

"But that's changing now as well, which is great. It's a really nice feeling that there's almost a democracy to it and I think social media and streaming has changed the game - although I do have things to talk about with streaming rights..."

It's those advancements that have helped the musician readjust to life as an artist in 2023, with a much more personable approach when it comes to engaging with fans - to whom she refers as 'friends' - both online and in real life. "We're all human beings, aren't we," she offers. "We all eat, we all breathe, we all shit and we all die. I get so much more fulfilment from being in the studio, creating, speaking to friends at gigs, or just having a nice chat in Tesco with an old lady who's telling me about her day.

"I really love to connect with people on a real level, so when anything starts to make me seem like I'm on some kind of pedestal, I find it really uncomfortable. I would love to do a gig where it's not me on the stage, but everyone is in a circle and I'm in the middle, so it almost feels like we're all in the gig together. I just really want there to be a sense that it's about the music and the message."

> **I GET BORED SO QUICKLY THAT I'M LITERALLY WRITING THE NEXT ALBUM NOW!**

It's those views that she's keen to convey not only through her music, but also her charity work with her non profit Say Something, which works with marginalised groups such as the LGBTQ+ and Black communities to allow their voices to be heard. And although she may not love playing the fame game, V V has no plans to step away from recording anytime soon and is already working on more material, teasing another new sound for the project.

"I used to feel embarrassed by my catalogue. I used to look at other artists and wish that I had a tidy, consistent sound so that if you heard it, you knew it was this artist's record. But when you listen to mine, it's like punk, pop, electronic, synth, ambient - and now hip-hop and soul," she laughs, quoting David Bowie who once joked: "I reinvented my image so many times that I'm in denial that I was originally an overweight Korean woman."

"People that follow me know when I'm gonna drop a record it's like, 'What are you gonna do next? Is it a heavy metal album?' Because I have ADHD; I only got diagnosed with it like in the last few years, but I think that plays into it massively. I get bored so quickly that I'm literally writing the next album now!" RP

The single *Black British* is out now. The full project is due later this year. V V Brown will play live at The Lower Third, London on May 23, with tickets on sale now.

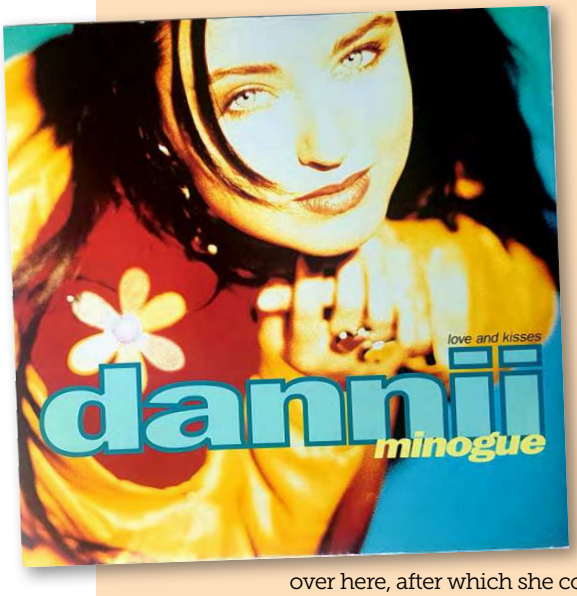
PHOTOS DANIEL PRICE

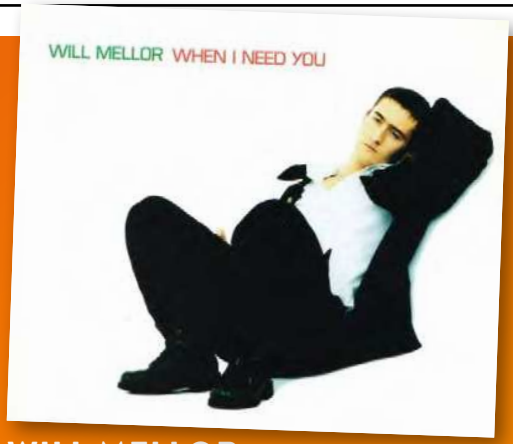
SOAP STAR TO POPSTAR

From the suburb of Erinsborough to the summit of the charts, 'Neighbours' has without doubt produced the most pop stars of any soap - but plenty of screen stars have given it a good shot...

DANNII MINOGUE
HOME AND AWAY

Where better to start than with our cover star Dannii Minogue, who went down the soap path for a while and appeared in 'Home and Away' as Emma Jackson from 1989 to 1990, before launching her music career and finding international success the following year with *Love And Kisses* - the lead track from her debut album of the same name. The song entered the Top 10 in the UK and Australia while the album peaked at No. 8 over here, after which she continued to land hits with *Success*, *Baby Love* and *This Is It*. Later in the decade, Dannii converted to dance music with *All I Wanna Do* - the lead track from her third album 'Girl' (1997) - and went on to score an impressive run of UK Dance Chart No. 1 hits.



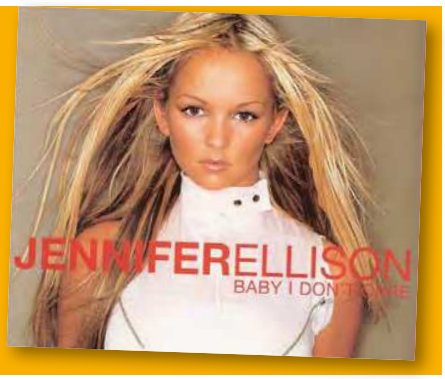


WILL MELLOR
HOLLYOAKS

From his role as lovable rogue Jambo, Will Mellor enjoyed a brief pop career in 1997 when he recorded and released a cover of Leo Sayer's *When I Need You*, with the track reaching No. 5 in the UK charts. Released on Jive Records, he quickly set to work on a follow-up, with the original single *No Matter What I Do* arriving the following year and landing him another Top 30 placement. It marked the end of his short but sweet chart run, but Will kept one foot in the pop world and, in 1999, he made an appearance in the music video for Boyzone's Comic Relief single *When The Going Gets Tough* - a cover of the Billy Ocean classic.

JENNIFER ELLISON - BROOKSIDE

After rising to prominence as Emily Shadwick in Brookside from 1998 to 2003, Jennifer Ellison transitioned to pop and debuted in the UK Top 10 with her cover of Transvision Vamp's pop rock anthem *Baby I Don't Care*. Despite scoring immediate success and strong sales, it was a year before she returned with the follow-up, *Bye Bye Boy* - a cover of the song originally recorded by the Japanese singer Nanase Aikawa - which peaked at No. 13, giving her a second Top 20 hit. The demand was there for an album, but instead Jennifer continued to work in TV and theatre, appearing in the West End production of Chicago as Roxie Hart, with which she later toured the UK.

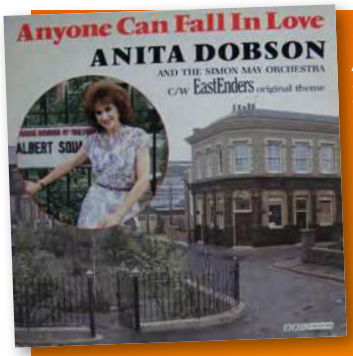


CLAIRE SWEENEY BROOKSIDE

Lindsey Corkhill actress Claire Sweeney rose to become one of the UK's best-loved stars in the early-noughties, thanks to her starring role in the Liverpool-based soap and a stint on the first-ever series of 'Celebrity Big Brother', after which she was cast as Roxie Hart in the London revival of the musical 'Chicago' and gained a reputation for her powerhouse vocals. It wasn't long before she was picked up by UK label Telstar and set to work on recording her first and only studio album, featuring cover versions including Brian May's *Too Much Love Will Kill You* and Celine Dion's *My Heart Will Go On*, plus her original single *When You Believe*. The album reached No. 15 in the charts and it remains her only LP to date - but its lead track did enjoy a life of its own and was later covered by Olivia Newton-John.

MATTHEW MARSDEN CORONATION STREET

In a real multiverse of madness moment, Coronation Street mechanic Chris Collins aka Matthew Marsden joining forces with Destiny's Child on a Hall & Oates cover ranks high on our list of iconic pop crossovers. Early in their career, Beyoncé, Kelly Rowland, LeToya Luckett, and LaTavia Roberson appeared on his 1998 cover of the 1976 track *She's Gone*, with the tune stalling at No. 24, a drop from his previous Top 20 hit *The Heart's Lone Desire*. Both featured on his debut album 'Say Who', along with the 1999 single *Walk My Way*, which failed to chart. Soon after he gave up on pop, but with a string of hit TV and film roles he's barely been off our screens since. Of course, things soon turned around for Destiny's Child too...



ANITA DOBSON - EASTENDERS

It was way back in 1986 that landlady of the Queen Vic Angie Watts aka Anita Dobson took a break from pulling pints to record her first single - a lyrical rendition of the show's iconic theme tune, titled *Anyone Can Fall In Love*, which peaked at No. 4 in the charts for two weeks over the summer. At the time it was a trailblazing move - long before Kylie or Jason even entered a recording studio - and proved significant personally too as her future husband, Queen guitarist Brian May, served as producer on the track. She later released several other singles, including a cover of the Phil Spector classic *To Know Him Is to Love Him*, along with a pair of albums - 'On My Own' (1986) and 'Talking Of Love' (1988) - but it's her first single that gave Anita her biggest chart success.

ADAM RICKITT - CORONATION STREET

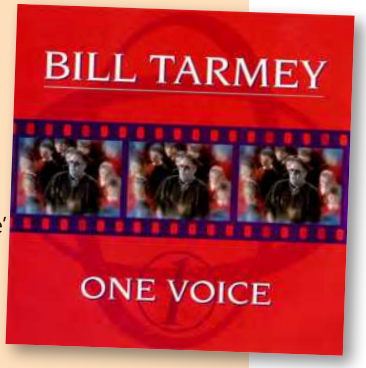
Original Nick Tilsley actor Adam Rickitt left Weatherfield's famous cobbles and arrived on the UK charts when he launched his pop career in 1999 with the Top 5 hit *I Breathe Again*. Released on Polydor, the track sold over 75,000 copies and stayed on the chart for 10 weeks, with its music video - in which he appears naked, trapped in a perspex box - becoming one of the most strikingly recognisable visuals of the time. He scored a further two Top 40 hits with *Everything My Heart Desires* and *The Best Thing*, but despite having inked a six album deal with the label he stepped away from music after his debut LP 'Good Times' stalled outside of the Top 40. Flash forward to 2014 and returned to pop, taking part in 'The Big Reunion' as part of a boy band supergroup with Dane Bowers and Kavana.

TRACY SHAW - CORONATION STREET

Former Corrie star Tracy Shaw was a huge part of the show in the late-nineties and early-noughties, so a transition to chart superstar didn't seem too much of a stretch. However, while things didn't go quite according to plan for her character Maxine Peacock, who met a grizzly end at the hands of serial killer Richard Hillman, Tracy's dreams of musical success suffered a similar fate. In 1998, she released her debut single *Happenin' All Over Again* - a cover of the Lonnie Gordon classic, produced by Mike Stock and Matt Aitken - but the track stalled at No. 46 in the charts. Follow-up *Ridin' High*, another collaboration with the duo, failed to chart and she soon went back to acting.

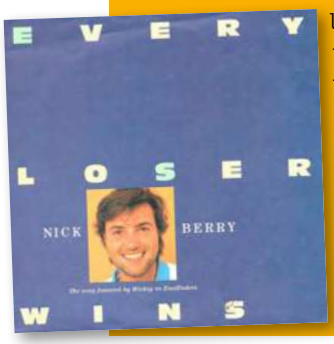
BILL TARMEY CORONATION STREET

Coronation Street's Jack Duckworth may have been best known for his legendary spats with wife Vera and their infamous stone cladding, but outside of the soap actor Bill Tarmey had another love: music. In 1993, he found success with his cover of Barry Manilow's *One Voice* - which he recorded with the St Winifred's School Choir - with the track taking him into the Top 20 of the UK chart. It was produced by Mike Stock and Pete Waterman and led to him inking a deal with EMI to record more music, including his hit albums 'A Gift Of Love' (1993) and 'Time For Love' (1994). In total, he released five LPs and even a duet with his on-screen love Liz Dawn, titled *I'll Be With You Soon*.



NICK BERRY EASTENDERS

Anita Dobson's transition to the pop charts prompted another of her castmates to give singing a shot - and Simon Wicks actor Nick Berry stole his co-star's thunder when his single *Every Loser Wins* climbed to No. 1 on the UK Charts. It was no mean feat, knocking Madonna's *True Blue* down to No. 2 in the process, becoming the second biggest-selling single in the UK that year (after *Don't Leave Me This Way* by The Communards), and securing composers Simon May, Stewart James and Bradley James an Ivor Novello Award for the composition. The success continued when he went on to sing on, and land a No. 2 hit with, the titular theme tune to 'Heartbeat', in which he also starred, with his self-titled 1992 album also becoming a UK Top 30 hit.



MARTINE MCCUTCHEON - EASTENDERS

Former 'EastEnders' star Martine McCutcheon can turn her hand to anything - from playing Tiffany Mitchell in the show, to being Liza Minnelli's bridesmaid or becoming a chart-topping pop star. She's got it all! After being mowed down by Frank Butcher on screen in 1998, Martine launched her music career the following year and hit the top of the charts with her debut single *Perfect Moment*, lifted from her first album 'You, Me & Us', which peaked at No. 2 in the UK. It also featured the Top 10s *I've Got You* and *Taking In Your Sleep / Love Me*, while follow-up 'Wishing' (2000) featured her hit Donna Summer cover *On The Radio*. 2002's 'Musicality' wasn't so well received, but Martine returned to music in 2017 with the Top 20 'Lost And Found' and even competed on 'The Masked Singer UK' in 2021.

KYLIE MINOGUE - NEIGHBOURS

The soap star turned pop star to end all soap stars turned pop stars, Kylie Minogue rocketed to global fame in the late-eighties thanks to a run of smash hit collaborations with the legendary Stock Aitken Waterman. Having scored a huge No. 1 in her native Australia with a playful cover of sixties classic *The Loco-Motion*, the Charlene Mitchell actress made the most of her supposed one-off moment in the charts and jetted to England to record a follow-up, with *I Should Be So Lucky* matching her previous chart feat, this time in the UK. An album followed and soon Kylie was one of the biggest pop stars on the planet, having since gone on to release 15 hit records and a string of chart-topping singles that make her one of the most successful female artists of all time.

JASON DONOVAN - NEIGHBOURS

Not long after Kylie launched her pop career, so did her on- and off-screen boyfriend Jason Donovan, with the Scott Robinson actor following in her footsteps and knocking on the studio door of Stock Aitken Waterman's fabled Hit Factory to turn him into a chart sensation. It wasn't long before he arrived with his debut single *Nothing Can Divide Us*, which took him into the Top 5, before the Kylie duet *Especially For You* and monster hit *Too Many Broken Hearts* both saw him hit the No. 1 spot. After releasing two albums on the PWL label, he transitioned to the world of musical theatre and landed the title role in 'Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat' on London's West End, from which his recording of the Andrew Lloyd-Webber classic *Any Dream Will Do* saw him return to the top of the charts.

DELTA GOODREM - NEIGHBOURS

Before she rose to become one of Australia's premier pop stars, Delta Goodrem appeared as Nina Tucker in 'Neighbours' while working on music in the background, after inking a deal with Sony Music at the age of 15. Her early releases failed to take off, but in 2002 she returned with the piano ballad *Born To Try* and topped the charts Down Under, while reaching No. 3 in the UK. Follow-up *Lost Without You* achieved similar success and her debut album 'Innocent Eyes' - released in 2003 - held on to the top spot for 29 consecutive weeks in Australia. Since then, she's released a total of seven studio albums and maintained a successful acting career while continuing to tour the world with her music.

NATALIE BASSINGTHWAITE NEIGHBOURS

From 2003 to 2006, Natalie Bassingthwaite rose to prominence as Izzy Hoyland in 'Neighbours', but mid-way through her tenure she became lead vocalist for electronic rock band Rogue Traders and enjoyed global success with the Top 3 hit *Voodoo Child*. She originally quit the group in 2008 and was replaced by Mindi Jackson on lead vocals, but in 2015 Natalie rejoined the band for a New Year's Eve gig and earlier this year they quietly returned with their first single in over a decade, *To The Disco*, which interpolates the group's 2007 track *On Your Way To The Disco*. With more new music on the way, we're at the very beginning of a new chapter for the former soap star.

THE TWINS
NEIGHBOURS

Gayle and Gillian Blakeney aka The Twins became well known for their stint in 'Neighbours' as Caroline and Christina Alessi, before they attempted to follow in Kylie and Jason's footsteps and joined Stock Aitken Waterman's Hit Factory roster with their debut single *All Mixed Up*. While their castmates saw overnight success, it was a different story for the duo, whose 1991 track failed to chart in the UK and stalled at No. 74 Down Under. Things started looking up when their second and third releases - *Mad If Ya Don't!* and *Wanna Be Your Lover*, released as Gayle and Gillian - hit No. 75 and No. 62 in the UK in 1993 and 1994, respectively, but they later gave up music and launched their own businesses instead.

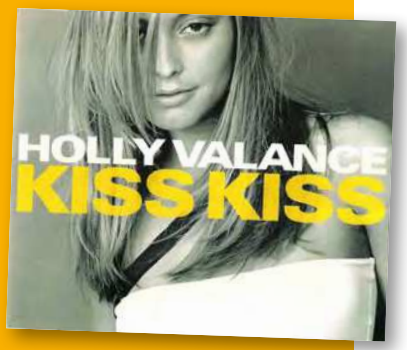
STEFAN DENNIS
NEIGHBOURS

While best known for his role as cold-hearted and ruthless businessman Paul Robinson in 'Neighbours' from 1985 to 1992, Stefan Dennis attempted a pop crossover months after Kylie, releasing his single *Don't It Make You Feel Good* in May of 1989. The track reached No. 16 in the UK charts and he later released a follow-up, *This Love Affair*, which fared not so well and peaked at No. 67. It remains his final release to date, after which he continued to appear in the show, returning in 1993 and again in 2004, from which point he's held down the role to this day.

NATALIE IMBRUGLIA
NEIGHBOURS

Another success story from the Aussie soap opera, Natalie Imbruglia first found success as Beth Brennan in 'Neighbours' before quitting the show, inking a record deal and launching to the top of the global charts with her cover of Ednaswap's *Torn* from her debut album 'Left Of The Middle' (1997). In the UK alone, it shifted over one million copies and peaked at No. 2, behind Aqua's *Barbie Girl*. It was the first of five Top 10 hits for the singer, who was nominated for three Grammys at the time, and recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of the record - which also went Top 10 in the US - with its first-ever vinyl release. In 2021, she returned to the UK Top 10 for the first time in 16 years with her long-awaited sixth album 'Firebird'.

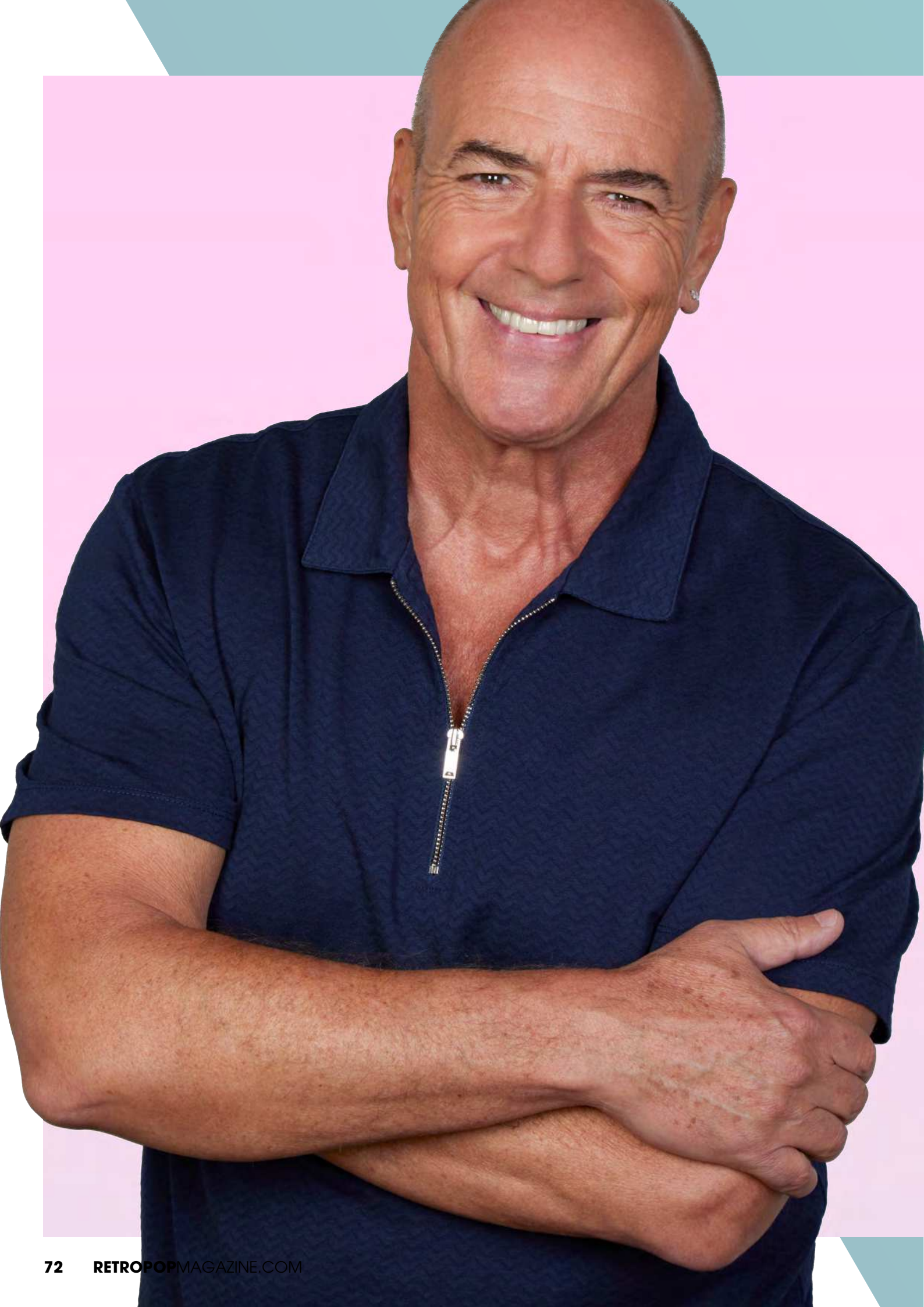
HOLLY VALANCE
NEIGHBOURS



The late-nineties and early-noughties saw a renewed interest in Aussie soap stars dominating the charts and another big name to come from Ramsay Street was Holly Valance, who peaked at No. 1 on the UK charts with her debut hit *Kiss Kiss*. The sexy track from the Felicity Scully actress attracted the attention of bosses at London Records, who inked a deal with the star for her debut LP 'Footprints', surrounding her with a team including Cutfather, Julian Gallagher, Nellee Hooper and Biffco who worked on hits such as *Down Boy* and *Naughty Girl*. The album was a Top 10 smash and led to her second and final LP, the brilliant 'State of Mind', which took an electro pop direction and delivered her most recent Top 20 hit single with its title song.

ANT & DEC - BYKER GROVE

Yes, Byker Grove wasn't technically a soap - but for kids it was the next best thing so we're going with Ant & Dec aka PJ & Duncan, who scored a run of 13 UK Top 20 singles between 1994 and 2002, including the iconic *Let's Get Ready to Rhumble* and the England football team's Official Song of the 2002 FIFA World Cup, *We're On The Ball*. In 2013, after the duo performed the track on 'Saturday Night Takeaway', the song topped the UK singles chart and gave them their first and to-date only No. 1 hit. While the pair quit releasing music after three albums, they still perform occasionally as part of their hit ITV show.



BRAVE NEW WORLD

Returning to his original label and reuniting with Go West's producer, **Peter Cox** opens up about heading back into the studio for his first album in a decade

WORDS SIMON BUTTON

Peter Cox's new album is something of a reunion; not, sadly, with his Go West pal Richard Drummie, but with the group's old label Chrysalis and original producer Gary Stevenson.

Launching in 1985 with the UK Top 5 hit *We Close Our Eyes* from their eponymous debut album, the duo scored a run of hits through 1993 and continue performing together to this day.

But a decade after his last solo LP, Peter is once again going it alone with 'Seaglass'; a 10-song collection of new material that draws on Go West's classic sound while reflecting the singer as he stands today.

MAGIC

"Gary and I go back more than 40 years," beams Cox about the man who produced their first three albums, "and it was a comfort zone for me if you like. We can communicate with one another much more easily than I might with a complete stranger."

With three EPs and eight solo albums already under his belt, he sighs: "The reactions I've had to my own efforts at recording have been either, 'It doesn't sound like Go West', or, 'Oh, it sounds just like Go West'. Obviously if I'm the featured voice then there is going to be some connection there but I've got a passionate if small fanbase and I guessed and hoped they'd like to hear some of the flavour of that production sound Gary contributes."

He's also back on Chrysalis Records and laughs: "I expected to be selling this album out of the back of a van after gigs." The music business is a complex one and his homecoming has its own story. Basically, Blue Raincoat Music bought the Chrysalis archives and last year put together an amazing box set of Go West's self-named 1985 debut album, spanning four CDs and a DVD.

When Blue Raincoat subsequently heard Peter was working on a new album of his own, they offered to licence it. "So even though I'm still paying for everything, it means it will get international distribution," he explains. "I'm obviously thrilled and excited to be on, if you will, a proper label."

The title 'Seaglass' refers to pieces of broken glass that have been smoothed by exposure to tides and the ocean. "It's very beautiful," he says, "but it also struck me that there's some kind of non-literal connection with knocking these songs into some sort of shape over a couple of years."

Now 67, Cox is - by his own admission - a slow-paced songwriter. "I'm constantly hearing about people who can write a song in a day and in places like Nashville writers typically attend two or three songwriting sessions in a day and get a song out of every one," he adds.

> **I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING WHERE I GOT TO MAKE ALL THE DECISIONS AND HAVE CREATIVE CONTROL.**

Having spent some time in LA prior to the release of Go West's third album 'Indian Summer' (1992), Peter adds: "I've got some experience of what that's like - meeting a stranger in the morning and theoretically having a song at the end of the day. But that's never really worked for me. In actual fact, I'm constantly tweaking the lyrics over a period of time. I'd go so far as to say that the lyric is not finished until the song is recorded, because I'm still fiddling about with this or that word, trying to get it as much to my own

satisfaction as I can."

He's not completely averse to collaboration, however: "Obviously I have a long history of writing with Richard." But of the writers he workshopped songs with in LA, only Martin Page - with whom the duo collaborated on *King of Wishful Thinking* - seemed to be on Cox's wavelength. "He was another ex-pat who'd had great success with Starship and Earth, Wind & Fire, and unlike most of the other writers he'd done his homework," the singer insists. "He obviously liked the first Go West album so he got where we were coming from."

TOO FAR GONE

Ten years since the release of his most recent album 'Damn the Brakes', it was during the Covid years that Peter began work on 'Seaglass' with his cover of Donna Missal's *Jupiter*. "Then after that it started to become almost a matter of pride," he admits. "I wanted to do something where I had written the songs from a personal view as much as possible but crucially where I got to make all the decisions and have that creative control without having to run everything by other people."

He recorded demos of the songs at home, which he then sent on to musicians and producers, including Stevenson. The result is a strong collection that does indeed have a Go West flavour on some songs and showcases his still-stunning voice. How does he keep it in good working order? "I take it a lot less for granted now," he maintains. "A few years back we were on tour with The Christians and Hue and Cry and I was having some problems stamina-wise as much as anything. I would say that on 95 per cent of the recordings I've done, the producer - and to a lesser extent I - have been careful to establish a key at the top of my range so that I have to try hard to reach those notes, which then hopefully injects that extra bit of energy and passion."

But on that particular tour he'd effectively lost his voice and was only able to access the lower register. Pat Kane from Hue and Cry had previously lost his voice altogether and had to stop performing and recording, but he was back on top form. When Peter asked him what his regime was, one of

the things Pat advised was to always warm-up. "Now I try to do that every day, whether I'm performing or not," he shares. "It's a muscle like any other, so I guess it's like doing bicep curls. You have to put that effort in, although unfortunately that's not to say it's in golden form at every gig. But I get out there, do my best and hopefully that's good enough for the fans."

To promote 'Seaglass' Cox is doing a string of solo shows with his own band. Is it strange not having Drummie by his side? Cox smiles affectionately: "Obviously he's been there more times than not, but again there's a certain freedom in being able to make all the creative decisions. It's freeing to decide, for example, what the setlist is going to be, to change it around if I want to and drop this song if I'm feeling that vocally I might not make such a great job of it on that particular night."

Will he be doing some Go West songs on the new tour? "I will, yes," is his somewhat reluctant answer. "I have to say, I would have preferred to have kept the two completely separate. The agent who has been booking these gigs, unknown to me, was telling the venues I would play Go West songs. I'll be keeping them a minimum and I hope the fans will embrace at least some of the material from the new record. It's a hoary old industry gag that the last thing the audience wants to hear is your new album, but that is the purpose of the gigs - to promote it and hopefully sell some copies. But yes, I will be playing some old material too."

17 AGAIN

When it comes to compiling setlists, there's lots of golden oldies to choose from. Bursting onto the scene in the mid-eighties in a blur of great pop songs and designer vests, Go West served up such catchy singles as *Call Me*, *Goodbye Girl* and *Don't Look Down* from their first album alone. 'Dancing on the Couch' (1987) sold well despite no sizable hits and 'Indian Summer' boasted *King of Wishful Thinking* from the 'Pretty Woman' soundtrack - giving them a No. 8 placing on the US chart.

> **I'M OBVIOUSLY THRILLED AND EXCITED TO BE ON, IF YOU WILL, A PROPER LABEL.**

But when Peter relocated to California in 1994 for five years, that was effectively the end of Go West - at least for the time being. "The reasons for parting company were many," he remembers. "Richard and I had lived in California when we were writing 'Indian Summer' and I absolutely loved it, whereas he was less of a fan. Also, we'd been in each other's pockets for decades by that time - writing, recording, gigging, promoting. Spending that much time together takes its toll on a relationship and I certainly needed a break."

He also wanted to see what he could achieve as a solo artist and concedes with a laugh: "It turned out to be less than I had hoped. I haven't won any awards, I haven't sold a truckload of records, but it's still been really enjoyable and I'm quite proud of the fact I managed to finance and make records at all. The industry has changed and I'm not 21 anymore. In some ways I'm quite glad not to be faced with the challenges that young artists today face."

Amidst various solo records on assorted labels, he also appeared on 'Reborn in the USA' in 2003 and was on track to win until he forgot the words to Norah Jones' *Don't Know Why*. "My mind went on holiday in the middle of it," he explains with a laugh.

Peter and Richard had begun performing together again three years prior to that vocal slip-up and have done gigs and tours ever since, either on their own or on the bill with other bands on the retro circuit. Last year they did an orchestral tour, which wasn't without its challenges. "You have to re-orchestrate the songs, which is complicated, but Rob Taggart [who is also keyboardist on Peter's tour this year] did a fantastic job of realising the songs in a way neither Richard nor myself was qualified or able to do," smiles the vocalist.

While still together on stage, the pair see much less of each other than they did in the past. "We only see each other when we're working and certainly our musical influences are very different," Peter muses. "I suppose they were way back in 1982 when we started listening to music together. That was the basis of our friendship and what became our songwriting collaboration. I had quite a narrow horizon back then. I was into Free, Bad Company and bands that didn't have keyboard players. Richard reintroduced me to Stevie Wonder and led me more towards West Coast music."

> **I GET OUT THERE, DO MY BEST AND HOPEFULLY THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR THE FANS.**

As for a new Go West album, it's not looking good. "Making an album is a big investment and there's an argument to say, 'What would be the point of it?'," he sighs. "I don't want to put words into Richard's mouth, but he doesn't seem motivated to make a new Go West album at the moment and I can kind of see why." **RP**

● ***Seaglass is out May 12 on Chrysalis Records. Peter Cox is touring the UK until May 26.***

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

INTRODUCING...

HERE AT LAST

Rising through the ranks on TikTok, boy band **Here At Last** look set for an exciting year ahead as they prepare to unveil their debut EP and embark on their first-ever UK tour!

If you spend any time keeping up with the hottest trends on TikTok, you've probably heard of up-and-coming boyband Here At Last.

Brought together by the power of the video-sharing platform, the five-piece - starring Zach Loizou (from London), Tommy Lyon (from Exeter), Pedro Santos (from Portugal), James Thomas (from Leyland) and Ryan Burns (from North Wales) - are currently living together in Reading as they prepare to release their debut EP and hit the road later this year.

Of their origins, Pedro explains: "Me and Tommy wanted to do a collab together at the start and then this idea of a boy band came along. I don't really know how, but it did, and we found these very talented people around us elsewhere on the internet, on hashtags and stuff like that."

Although keen to form a band, they never advertised for members. "We weren't really headhunting; we just thought it would be cool to get together and sing as a five," explains Tommy. "So we sent them messages, but it wasn't anything formal. No emails, just DMs."

The boys have since notched up over three million followers on TikTok alone and their first single *Tongue*, released in 2021, has been streamed over one million times on Spotify. They recently released a new version of the track alongside a cover of Niall Horan's latest hit *Heaven*, and the boys - aged between 21 and 23, who use their income from the social media platform to fund their music - cite One Direction among their influences.

> Going from doing singing videos in our rooms during Covid to having 2,000 people there, just for us five, was mega.
>
> **TOMMY**

"We're pretty big fans and we think the song is amazing," says James. "That's one of the main reasons we wanted to cover it. Obviously, we'll tap into that audience as well, but I think it works quite well with what we've done with it, because we've added in all the different harmonies."

When it comes to their other musical reference points, it's a broad spectrum of styles that makes up the band's sound. Ryan's a fan of Aussie pop rock group 5 Seconds of Summer, while Pedro names Coldplay and James is into singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran. Zach, meanwhile, is a longtime Oasis fan, and for Tommy it's Canadian pop star Justin Bieber.

It's a mixed bag the boys admit "weirded them out" when they first met. "But if you look at our Spotify, *Casting Shadows* is very different to *Bloodshot*, which is also very different to *Like The 90s*, which is very different to *Happy*," adds Pedro. "So I think we're at the stage where, even though we're all standing in different corners musically, we all come together to this middle ground."

Having formed and bonded during the Covid years, it's only recently that Here At Last have been able to venture out and meet fans - even though their most devout followers probably know them better than they know themselves due to their online presence.

They're so used to the band checking in, in fact, that when one of the guys doesn't post they automatically fear the worst. "We did a few videos the other day and I wasn't in them - I was out for whatever reason - so these guys recorded them as a four and all the messages are like, 'Where's James?!'," laughs the singer. "It's the same if any of the other guys are missing; we can't get away with having a day off."

He adds: "Right now, we're not doing any live shows for a couple of months so we're having a bit of a lull, but when we do tour we will be really pushing for the fans to be as much a part of this process as they are for the actual gigs, so they can have more of an insight to the behind the scenes and how it's all actually done."

They won't have long to wait; with their aptly-titled 'EP1' due August 15, the boys are heading into the autumn with

Here At Last (l-r): Zack Loizou, Ryan Burns, Tommy Lyon, James Thomas, Pedro Santos

their five-date 'Happy You're Here' UK tour launching at Glasgow's Stereo on October 20 and playing through October 25 at London's indigo at The O2.

They've already tested the waters with a handful of one-off shows, including a date at London's Shepherd's Bush Empire, of which Tommy admits: "It was bloody scary, I won't lie. My heart was beating at about 1,000 beats per second! But when we came out and the lights came up, you could just see all these faces there and it's like, 'Wow'. Going from doing singing videos in our rooms during Covid to having 2,000 people there, just for us five, was mega."

The shows will give the five-piece the opportunity to debut material from their upcoming release live and, when it comes to the content on offer, they say it takes their sound to the next level. "There are a few tracks on there that you wouldn't really expect us to be on, which I think is probably the most exciting part," Pedro smiles. "We felt a little bit out of our comfort zone going into the studio and recording this, I guess, but we think it sounds really good. A lot of it has been like building a character and figuring out what we like and what we don't like, and that's in terms of the whole thing, not just certain songs."

With a packed six months ahead of them, the boys have plenty to keep them busy - but that doesn't stop them dreaming big as they look past this year, through 2024 and beyond. "We always try to not look too far into the future, because if you look too far into where you want to be then you miss all the amazing things that you're doing right now," muses James. "But I mean, everyone's dream is to do a world tour or play Wembley Stadium, things like that, and I guess we're taking as many steps as we possibly can to get to that point. And so far, it's all going well and the future is exciting - I think that's the only word we can use for it, really!" **RP**

● ***Here At Last will release 'EP1' on August 15. The 'Happy You're Here' tour launches on October 20 and tickets are on sale now.***

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

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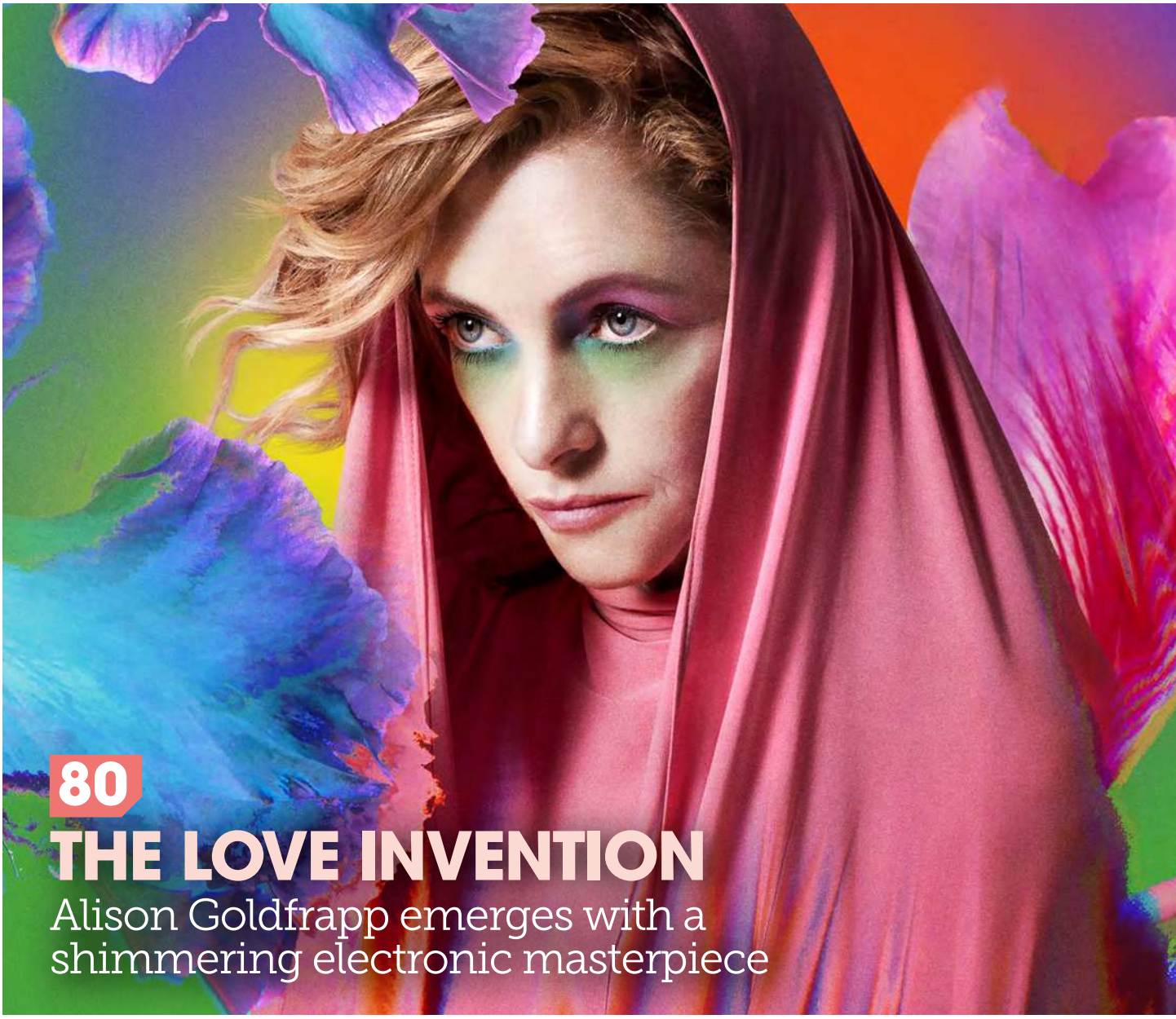


80 THE LOVE INVENTION

Alison Goldfrapp emerges with a shimmering electronic masterpiece

PHOTO MAT MAITLAND

83

THE GIRL IS CRYING IN HER LATTE

Sparks push boundaries with art pop excellence

86

KISMET

Belinda Carlisle makes a triumphant return to pop

89

THE ALBUM

Jonas Brothers take a musical voyage through the decades

RATINGS EXPLAINED: ★★★★★ BRILLIANT ★★★★☆ GOOD ★★★☆☆ AVERAGE ★★☆☆☆ POOR ★☆☆☆☆ TERRIBLE

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS

ALISON GOLDFRAPP
THE LOVE INVENTION
★★★★★

RELEASED: **May 12 *Skint***
FORMATS: **CD, Standard Black Vinyl, Limited Edition Green Vinyl (Artist Store Exclusive), Limited Edition Purple Vinyl + Signed Postcards (Retail Exclusive)**

Arriving with her debut solo album, Alison Goldfrapp conjures an electronic dreamworld as she unveils 'The Love Invention'.

For more than two decades, the musician has worked closely with Goldfrapp collaborator Will Gregory, but in stepping away from familiarity the singer and songwriter finds new creative equals with Richard X and James Greenwood and in doing so delivers a defining record in her near-30-year career.

Opening with pre-release single *NeverStop* - an ode to "always feeling the wonder" and "committing to connect with each other, nature and our surroundings while trying to navigate through the contradictions and complexities of life" - 'The Love Invention' is heavy with synthesisers and electronic beats, over which Alison's distinctive breathy vocals inject a sense of wide-eyed wonder.

While much of the album is made for the clubs, there's a vibrancy to the material that radiates across the set, with *So Hard So Hot* conjuring the sweat-soaked atmosphere of summer festival raves while reaching into nocturnal darkness as she sings, *'Do you know how the stars were made / Yeah you know how to radiate'.*

It's a dichotomy seen in the alternative versions of *Digging Deeper Now* and *Fever*, which first appeared in remixed form, courtesy of Claptone and Paul Woolford, respectively, but are included on the standard tracklist in their original configurations as electro pop numbers as opposed to headier moments. While both are laden with intensified beats, the production of the original versions is perfection - a standard that's held across the entirety of 'The Love Invention' - to the point where the amped-up mixes ironically feel under-produced when compared to the nuanced arrangements on the album itself.

From the productions and performances to the songs themselves, nothing about this album is spared, but at its core 'The Love Invention' is a pop record that implores you to surrender to the music and embrace the moment - right now. The sublime synth pop of *Fever* is an ode to the intoxicating majesty of the dancefloor, with a chorus that explodes as if setting off a glitter cannon, while the Balearic synths and a swooping punch-the-air chorus on *Love Invention (Dr. What?)* capture an unmistakable sense of pleasure.

Similarly, highlights like *In Electric Blue* exude uninhibited liberation, with a synth pop confection that captures the surrender of one immersed in the first throes of love. "It makes me think of shiny cars, and that rush of energy and elation you have as a teenager," says Alison, who at 56 years of age has no reservations about exploring her fantasies and deepest pleasures in a sandbox without boundaries, with a freedom that radiates in her delivery. It should also be noted that the entirety of the vocals on the album, which are frequently layered and oftentimes augmented, come from the musician herself.

On the dreamy yet foreboding *Subterfuge*, Alison cut up and looped spliced vocal tracks to create a textural, rhythmic palette for one of the more experimental tunes on this wholly varied body of work, while closing track *SLoFLo* is a dreamy slice of laid back electronic pop that's among the most beautiful pieces of work she's ever lent her voice to.

Meanwhile, album highlight *The Beat*

Divine is a sultry slice of after-dark disco, as she extends a rallying call to unite on the dance floor and makes use of her musical power to bring people together and live in the here and now. *'You're the music, sensual elevation'*," she sings, as if embodying the intoxicating beats and inescapable euphoria of the club scene. *'You're the astral invitation'.*

For years, Alison Goldfrapp has been the face and voice of her eponymous synth pop act and you'd be forgiven for asking - what's the fuss about? But from the opening beats of 'The Love Invention', there's a shift in her musical sphere that sees the artist elevate her craft to soaring new heights, relieving herself of all inhibitions and hang-ups and instead following her intuition and creating an unfaltering slice of shimmering electro pop that feels like it's been building inside of her, waiting to scream out into the ether, for years.

Cut to the heart of the matter, though, and 'The Love Invention' is also a bloody good pop record that has everything great pop music should: infectious beats, undeniable hooks, great lyrics and, at the forefront of it all, one of British pop's brightest and most enduring stars.

PHOTO MAT MAITLAND

HEAD FIRST

As Alison dives into a new chapter, take a look back at her biggest hits with Goldfrapp from the past 20 years...

STRICT MACHINE (2003)

A breakthrough moment in Goldfrapp's rise to the top that showcases their approach to pop; inspired by an article about lab rats that prompted a lyric centred on ideas of sex and control, the track served as the second single from their sophomore album 'Black Cherry' and marked the duo's UK Top 20 debut.

OOH LA LA (2005)

The one that everyone knows and for good reason, Goldfrapp reached their singles peak when they rocketed into the UK Top 5 with the lead release from their third album 'Supernature'. Heavy with synths and guitar with overarching glam influences, it's a sultry and often ambiguous track that longs for sex without the demands of romance.

NUMBER 1 (2005)

The follow-up to *Ooh La La* was another smash hit for the duo and while thematically similar, its mid tempo beat demonstrates a different side to Goldfrapp's sound that incorporates elements of electroclash and new wave. Over on the charts, it gave them a second UK Top 10 and topped the US Dance Chart.

A&E (2008)

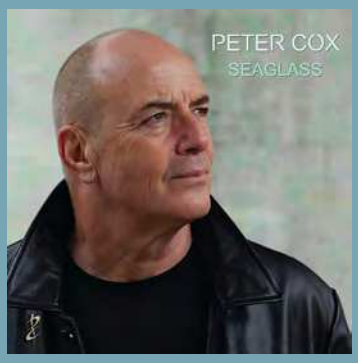
When everyone expected 'Supernature Vol 2', Goldfrapp instead delivered dreamy folktronica on *A&E* - the lead single from 'Seventh Tree', inspired by a trip to the emergency room that saw Alison pumped up with pills that made her *'feel blue'*. Harking back to Dubstar's nineties hits, it proved another crowd pleaser.

ROCKET (2010)

By the time of their fifth album 'Head First', it had been five years since Goldfrapp last topped the US Dance Charts, but the synth-laden *Rocket* took them back to No. 1 and helped launch another UK Top 5 album in style. A straightforward pop track, it remains one of their most commercial releases while carrying through the duo's inimitable sound.

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS



PETER COX
SEAGLASS
★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **May 12 *Chrysalis***

FORMATS: **CD, Limited Edition Clear Vinyl (SDE Exclusive)**

Almost 40 years after Go West released their hit debut album, Peter Cox returns to his first musical home at Chrysalis Records for his latest solo LP.

The 10-track record is the singer's first long-player in over a decade and has been a long-time coming, with lead single and album opener *Too Far Gone* arriving back in 2021, but with timeless production from original producer Gary Stevenson underpinning Cox's distinctive vocals, 'Seaglass' could be traced back to any point in the past four decades.

On *She Wants Magic*, rolling drums and eighties synths hark back to the group's early years, while *Brave New World,* with its shiny keys and uplifting layered harmonies, looks to a bright future.

Revisiting his youth, Peter journeys back through the decades on the nostalgic mid tempo *17 Again* as he tackles the dark side of love, while *Things We Never Did* is a joyous ode to taking life by the reins, living in the moment, and embracing a new adventure each and every day.

Of the tracks, nine are penned by the performer himself, while his cover of American singer-songwriter Donna Missal's *Jupiter*, co-written with indie superstar Sharon Van Etten, is a stunning reinterpretation that oozes passion while showcasing Cox's versatility as a vocalist and building to a rousing climax.

Closing with the feelgood *Confidant*, on which he pledges, *'You'll be safe with me / No regret you need to hide / No secret that you can't confide'*, it's a lyric that ties together the themes of the album while reflecting his musical journey to this point.

It was in 1997 that Peter released his first solo LP and over the past 25 years he's continued to deliver new material and play live to fans around the world. Strikingly, the record is sequenced like a live show - opening with a bang and weaving through uptempo numbers and stirring ballads, before ending on a high - there's a warm familiarity to the album that captures the magic of a time gone by.

On 'Seaglass', the stars align and whether it's returning to Chrysalis or reuniting with Stevenson, Cox is reinvigorated and ready to deliver his strongest body of work in a long time.

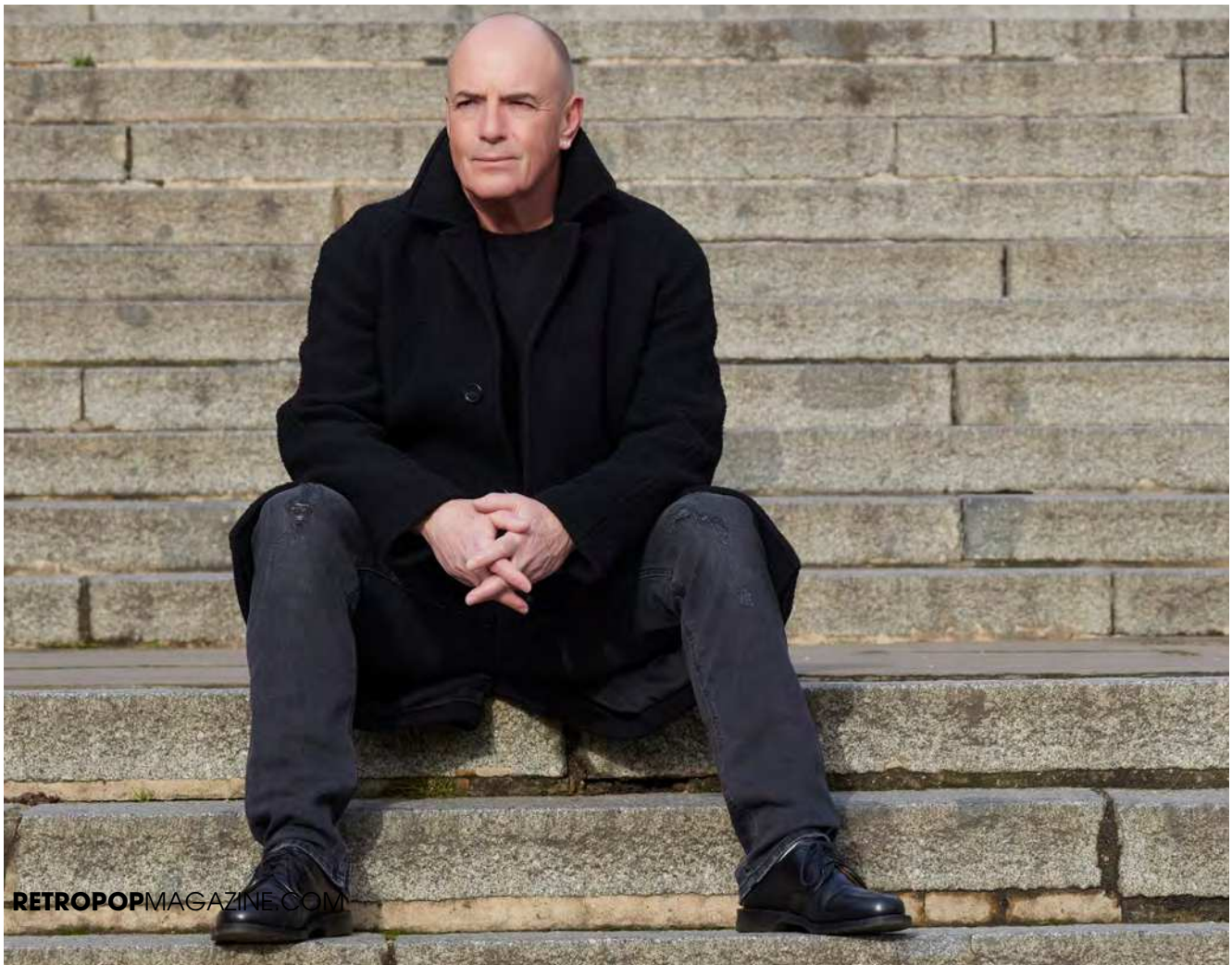


PHOTO WILL WHITE

SPARKS
THE GIRL IS CRYING IN HER LATTE
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **May 26 *Island***

FORMATS: **CD, Standard Black Vinyl, Limited Edition Clear Vinyl, Limited Edition Picture Disc Vinyl, Cassette**

Returning to their original home of Island Records for the first time in more than four decades, Sparks deliver avant garde electronic excellence on their latest album 'The Girl Is Crying In Her Latte'.

The 26th album from the ever-prolific Los Angeles Mael brothers clocks in at 14 tracks and launches with its title song, which also serves as the record's lead single.

With an underpinning darkness and a brooding sense of urgency that builds throughout, it sets the tone for an album that explores a multitude of soundscapes, each of which exists within its own narrative, set at various places and times. *Veronica Lake* reverts to golden years of cinema with a hypnotic ode to the late silver screen icon, while *The Mona Lisa's Packing, Leaving Late Tonight* explores one's place in the world through the eyes of one of the most famous pieces of art in history.

More a series of paintings or vignettes than a collection of songs, every colour is mixed to precision and each brush stroke made with intent, whether it's to create a sense of urgency on the stirring *We Go Dancing* or the petulant defiance of *Nothing Is As Good As They Say It Is*.

Meanwhile, experimental moments like *Escalator* and *Take Me For A Ride* deviate from the traditional pop structure and showcase Sparks' enduring creativity that has sustained throughout their 50+ year career.

While that's an aspect of their craft that they take seriously, there are several moments of deadpan humour throughout 'The Girl Is Crying In Her Latte' - most notably closing track *Gee, That Was Fun*, which is delivered in straight monotone over drums and piano that perfectly embodies everything we so love about the duo.

Few artists enjoy a career as fruitful as Sparks, let alone sustain such creativity over half a century, but on their latest LP they remain as witty, sharp and brilliant as ever, offering up a body of work that stands bold against the backdrop of their masterful catalogue.

PHOTO MUNACHI OSEGBU

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SIMPLY RED
TIME
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **May 26 *Warner***

FORMATS: **Standard CD, Deluxe CD, Standard Black Vinyl, Limited Edition Red Vinyl (Artist Store Exclusive), Limited Edition Gold Vinyl (Retail Exclusive), Limited Edition Curacao Vinyl (Amazon Exclusive)**

On their 13th album, Simply Red deliver an unfaltering showcase of passion and timeless pop music.

Marking the first long-player from Mick Hucknall and co since 2019's 'Blue Eyed Soul', 'Time' was recorded in London with longstanding producer Andy Wright and a tight group of musicians who breathe into the material the same life as in band's live shows.

"When we were in lockdown, I went, well, jeez, who am I actually?" remembers the group's frontman of its origins. "What makes me tick? And I realised: you are a songwriter. So why don't you write some songs about who you are? That's really the essence of this album."

Preceded by the lead single *Better With You*, the album segues between soul, funk, R&B and blues, showcasing the band's versatility and enduring appeal, with Hucknall's vocals as captivating as they were three decades ago.

The groove of *Just Like You* (parts one and two) is infectious, while the mid tempo *Shades 22* is a hypnotic ode to living life with the glass half full, as he croons: *'Shades on a rainy day / I'm playing like the sun is shining'*.

It's a theme that appears more than once on the album, including the perspective-setting *Hey Mister* and closing number *Earth In A Lonely Space*, while *Too Long At The Fair* sees him navigate strife and ask, *'Where do we go from here?'*, in a lyric laced with political references and biblical allusions.

Oftentimes understated, 'Time' is an album to be listened to as a whole, although a handful of tracks - most notably the rousing *Let your Hair Down* and raw *Never Be Gone* - stand out as potential singles while forming key elements of the overall picture.

"Music is one of those wonderful communicators," adds Mick of his approach to the project. "Each and every person can have an interpretation of a song that can mean something to them. To be able to create something that is then shared with millions of people all over the world – what a joy. How can anything be more rewarding and fulfilling than that?"

Whether the more pop-leaning numbers or the intimate, confessional moments on the LP, what's undeniable is the musicianship throughout - in terms of performance, production, and the songs themselves - all of which work together to render 'Time' an essential Simply Red record.

PHOTO DEAN CHALKLEY

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS

BELINDA CARLISLE
KISMET
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **May 12 (Physical: August 2023) *RAF/BMG***

FORMATS: **CD, Limited Edition Purple Vinyl**

Almost three decades since the release of her most recent pop record, Belinda Carlisle returns to exceptional form with the stunning five-track 'Kismet'.

Released in 1996, 'A Woman and A Man' - the sixth solo album from the US superstar - was a commercial hit, marking her return to the UK Top 10 with lead single *In Too Deep*, but behind the scenes she was locked in a battle with addiction and ultimately stepped away from pop.

However, in a true happening of destiny she found herself on the other end of the phone to songwriting supremo Diane Warren, who lured her back into the studio. "I really wasn't thinking I would ever make [another pop record] again... and I was quite happy with that idea," she says. "Then a chance encounter in a coffee shop led me back to the wonderful Diane Warren."

Picking up where she left off, lead single and opening track *Big Big Love* is a full circle moment, drawing on her new wave-inspired work with the band and anthemic solo hits that wouldn't sound out of place on the 'Live Your Life Be Free' (1991) album.

Authentically Belinda, all five songs touch different bases and reference various eras from her career; the empowering *If You Go* could easily have featured on any of her late-eighties records, while soaring midtempo *Deeper Into You* channels the AC direction of her later material.

Originally recorded by LeAnn Rimes for her 2016 album 'Remnants', *I Couldn't Do That To Me* is reminiscent of classic Belinda ballads like *Vision of You* and *Half The World*, with a vocal that remains powerful and strikingly ageless, while closing number *Sanity* - heavy with strings and layered harmonies - builds to a hypnotic outro as she sings, *'You abandoned me / Why did you go...'*

Undoubtedly her strongest material since the early-nineties, 'Kismet' is a welcome reminder not only of Belinda's power as one of the greatest pop stars of a generation, but also Diane Warren's knack for penning a killer hit.

"Diane's songwriting is both a joy and mystery to me," the vocalist agrees. "She makes it look so easy, where I imagine it must be unbelievably hard, to do what she does so amazingly well over so many years and so many records. I can't thank her enough for writing this music for me and I only hope everyone else loves it as much as I do."

EXCLUSIVE TRACK BY TRACK

Celebrating her long-awaited return to pop, Belinda gives **RETROPOP** an exclusive track-by-track of her latest project!

BIG BIG LOVE

The moment I heard this song, I loved it. It sounded so modern and had that eighties synth twist. I thought from the beginning that it sounded like a first single.

IF U GO

A straight forward, driving pop song. It's full on from the beginning - I love how the chorus kicks in!

DEEPER INTO YOU

I wanted to have a mid-tempo song in the same vein as *I Get Weak*; in some ways it reminds me of that song. I love the lyrics - very romantic.

I COULDN'T DO THAT TO ME

This song really took shape when I did all the background vocals - in some ways it reminded me of *Nothing Compares 2 U*. We weren't sure of the direction at first, but after the backing vocals were done, we worked around them. The production had to be sparse but also powerful.

SANITY

The oddest song of the bunch - but I absolutely loved it the first time I heard it. The hardest song I've ever sung!

PHOTO BILL PHOTOGRAPHY

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS

JONAS BROTHERS
THE ALBUM
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **May 12 *Republic***

FORMATS: **CD, Deluxe CD (HMV Exclusive), Standard Black Vinyl, Limited Edition Red Apple Vinyl (Retail Exclusive)**

Bringing together a plethora of influences from across the decades, Joe, Kevin and Nick Jonas have never sounded more timeless than on their sixth studio record.

Aptly-titled 'The Album', the 12-song set is executive produced by Jon Bellion, who set out to "wipe the palette clean and demolish every expectation and box the brothers have ever been put into out the gate".

"We pushed ourselves to launch this thing musically into space while grounding it in a sort of Americana / Laurel Canyon nostalgia," he says. "There was a time when structure and composition mattered not only loops and vibes, and we dove into that mind frame."

Opening track *Miracle*, with its funk-inspired groove and juxtaposing falsetto and raspy vocals, sees the group channel seventies icons the Bee Gees while infusing their own modern edge. It's an era they revisit frequently on the record, be it on the Eagles-influenced *Montana Sky* or Studio 54-esque *Sail Away*.

Among the most commercial offerings are pre-release tracks *Wings* and *Waffle House*, with the shuffle of the former not dissimilar to the sound of seventies Fleetwood Mac and the funk edge of their latest release reminiscent of Kool & The Gang with added elements of pop rock.

Lyrically, it's one of a number of personal tracks to the group, tackling their relationships as brothers and bandmates and their affinity with the namesake eateries, where they celebrated, had hard conversations, broke up, and got together again.

Among the other significant narratives, *Vacation Eyes* is about how Kevin and his wife Danielle first met, while *Little Bird* deals with kids growing older and flying the nest.

From the Shania Twain-esque country twang of *Summer Baby* to the Oasis-inspired closing track *Walls*, you'd be forgiven for thinking the group is suffering an identity crisis. But that couldn't be farther from the truth; in blending together their personal influences and musical preferences, the sibling trio's latest LP might be their most authentic yet.

It's a process that spilled into the recording in more ways than one, says Jon. "We went so deep into the spirit and energy of the late seventies, the mustaches and long hair method acting approach started to just become our actual reality," he laughs. "The brothers have a God given ability and talent that deserves this level of record making at this point, and I just wanted to honor how special they are with this music."

Putting their Disney days firmly in the past, 'The Album' is a statement piece that showcases Joe, Kevin and Nick not only as singers, but fully formed artists delivering their strongest material to date.

PHOTO PAMELA LITTKY

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | **REISSUES** | COMPILATIONS

BRITNEY SPEARS
GREATEST HITS: MY PREROGATIVE, FEMME FATALE, BRITNEY JEAN
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **May 26 *Sony***
FORMATS: **Limited Edition Coloured Vinyl (Pale Yellow, Light Grey Marble, Blue Marble)**

The final three releases in the international reissue series of Britney Spears' first seven albums brings her record-releasing run full circle.

Previously available in the US via Urban outfitters, 'Greatest Hits: My Prerogative' (2004), 'Femme Fatale' (2011), and 'Britney Jean' (2013) now make their international debut on wax with a run of coloured pressings.

The first best-of collection from the pop princess includes some of her biggest hits plus its titular cover of Bobby Brown's 1988 classic and is presented as a double-disc set with a handful of bonus mixes.

Meanwhile, the seventh and eighth albums from Britney - representing her later output, with hits including *Hold It Against Me*, *Till The World Ends* and *Work Bitch* - are presented on marbled discs that enhance the artwork.

Each edition faithfully replicates the original sleeve, with printed inners/inserts, and illuminates Britney's enduring appeal, over a decade into her career, that saw her continue to deliver hit after hit.

ABBA
RING RING
★★★★★

RELEASED: **May 19 *Polydor***
FORMATS: **2LP Black Vinyl, 5LP 7" Vinyl Box Set, 5 x Individual Singles Picture Discs**

Celebrating five decades since its original release, ABBA's first album 'Ring Ring' is reissued in a number of formats that highlight the Swedish supergroup's earliest work.

Originally credited to Björn and Benny, Agnetha and Frida, the album debuted in their home country in the spring of 1973 and delivered the hit singles *People Need Love*, *He Is Your Brother*, and the title song, which formed a blueprint for the group's sound going forward.

It proved a hit, with the Swedish-language version topping the charts and the English recording following close behind at No. 2, while the album peaked at No. 3.

Although not a major international hit like their post-Eurovision releases, 'Ring Ring' is an integral part of ABBA history and for its latest milestone is reissued across vinyl, as a 2LP Vinyl set remastered at Abbey Road Studios, and as a series of 7" singles, available as a Box Set or individual Picture Discs.

It's a treatment that's been afforded to some of the group's more commercially-successful LPs in recent years, but as ABBA celebrate five decades of chart success it's only fitting that they journey back to where it all began and pay tribute to their debut record in style.

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | **REISSUES** | COMPILATIONS

BEVERLEY CRAVEN
MEMORIES – THE COMPLETE EPIC RECORDINGS 1990-1999
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **May 26 *Cherry Pop***
FORMATS: **3CD**

Singer-songwriter Beverley Craven's early album series is revisited for a first-of-its-kind box set, bundled with B-sides and rarities.

Having signed to Epic Records in the late eighties, the musician broke through to the mainstream in 1991 with the radio staple *Promise Me*, which peaked at No. 3 on the UK charts and went on to achieve double-platinum sales.

Hits including *Holding On*, *Woman To Woman* and *Memories* followed, with Beverley scooping the Best Newcomer BRIT Award in 1992 before returning the following year with 'Love Scenes', featuring guest appearances by Jeff Beck and The London Chamber Orchestra.

After a six-year hiatus to focus on raising her family, the star returned in 1999 with her final album for Epic, the sweeping 'Mixed Emotions' – her first self-produced outing – showcasing some of her most accomplished work to date, which is celebrated as part of this 48-track set.

Alongside the original albums, B-sides, alternate versions and live recordings offer alternative perspectives on her work, while the set is accompanied by a 24-page booklet including many rare unseen photographs by Neil MacKenzine Matthews and an interview with the singer.

More than 30 years on from her earliest success, 'Memories' is a welcome reminder of Beverley Craven's brilliance and a testament to her songwriting and stunning vocal performances.

OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN
JUST THE TWO OF US: THE DUETS COLLECTION (VOL. 1)
★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **May 5 *Primary Wave***
FORMATS: **CD, 2LP Black Vinyl**

Celebrating Olivia Newton-John's decades-spanning legacy is this stunning collection of duets.

The late star's legendary career is immortalised in 32 star-studded collaborations with her dear friends, including Barry Gibb, Mariah Carey, and her daughter, Chloe Lattanzi, on tracks that encompass the past 50 years.

Preceded by the single *Jolene* - a cover of Dolly Parton's country classic, featuring the singer-songwriter herself - it was the last song Newton-John ever recorded prior to her passing.

But 'Just The Two Of Us' is less a tribute and more a celebration of the beloved entertainer's career in music, with the sheer volume of high-profile names she worked with a testament to her enduring talent.

Olivia's duet partners also include Cliff Richard, Jon Secada, Marie Osmond, and her 'Grease' co-star John Travolta, among many others.

With such a wealth of material in her catalogue, there were numerous options for posthumous releases but for the often-overlooked star, it's a brilliant move to put her star power front and centre alongside some of the biggest names in music.

Labelled as Volume 1, it seems there's even more to come!

ULTRAVOX
QUARTET
★★★★★

RELEASED: **May 5 *Chrysalis***
FORMATS: **2LP Black Vinyl, 6CD+DVD Box Set, 4LP Clear Vinyl Box Set**

Ultravox's third album with Midge Ure on vocals is revisited for a bumper re-release featuring a host of additional, previously-unheard material.

Featuring four UK Top 40 singles - *Reap The Wild Wind*, *We Came To Dance*, *Visions Inn Blue* and *Hymn* - it was another commercial success for the group and although not regarded in as high esteem as its predecessors, this expanded set casts new light on the creative process.

Recorded 1982 in London's AIR Studios from June to July, then July to August in Montserrat, the release includes 70 tracks in total, with 47 previously unreleased recordings.

Featured on the most comprehensive edition (the seven-disc set) is the original 1982 album production master, new stereo mixes by Steven Wilson, A-sides, B-sides and live tracks, previously unreleased Cassette Rehearsals and Monitor Mixes along with a newly-mixed concert recorded at the Hammersmith Odeon in December 1982,

The DVD additionally includes a new 5.1 Surround Sound Mix of the Album/B-sides by Steven Wilson along with 24/96 Hi-Res audio of the new mixes and the original 1982 Master/B-sides, offering a new clarity to the recordings.

It's another fine deluxe treatment that serves up everything we want to hear and more from one of the defining acts of the early-eighties.

DEBBIE HARRY
KOOKOO
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **May 5 *Chrysalis***
FORMATS: **2LP Clear Vinyl**

The first solo album from Blondie icon Debbie Harry is remastered and expanded for a deluxe celebration of the classic LP.

Arriving in 1981, the record was conceived while Debbie and Chris Stein took a break from the group, with the frontwoman teaming up with Chic's Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards to produce an album fusing funk, rock, disco and new wave.

Pre-dating their future work with David Bowie and Madonna, the record was game-changing four decades ago and remains a turning point in pop history that continues to influence the charts to this day.

Featuring the hit singles *Backfired* and *The Jam Was Moving*, this double-disc set is pressed on Clear Vinyl with a bonus collection of remixes of the singles, and album track *Inner City Spillover*.

Mastered from the original pre-production tapes and cut at Half-Speed by Miles Showell at Abbey Road Studios and packaged with the original iconic sleeve design by Swiss artist H.R. Giger, it's a stunning set that pays tribute to Debbie Harry's often-overlooked solo output.

TEARS FOR FEARS
THE HURTING
★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **May 12 *Mercury/ UMC***
FORMATS: **Limited Edition Black Vinyl (Half Speed Master), Limited Edition Blu-Ray (SDE Exclusive)**

Forty years on from its original release, Tears For Fears' debut album 'The Hurting' gets another chance to shine thanks to a special anniversary reissue.

Initially released in 1983, the LP features three classic Top 5 hit singles - *Mad World*, *Change* and *Pale Shelter* - and peaked at No. 1 on the UK Albums Chart in its second week of release.

Written solely by Roland Orzabal, the loose concept album focuses on themes of childhood psychological trauma and Arthur Janov's Primal Scream therapy - the theories behind which gave the band their name - and remains not only a pivotal record in their catalogue, but a defining moment in early-eighties pop music.

Revisiting the collection, 'The Hurting' is available as an Abbey Road Half Speed Mastered Vinyl and as a newly created Dolby Atmos mix by renowned artist and mixer, Steven Wilson, with the sound remastered to incredible quality. The Dolby Atmos mix, along with a 5.1 mix, an instrumental mix, the original album master and two previously unheard tracks, will also be released as a limited edition standalone Blu-Ray disc.

Although expanded in box set form for its 30th anniversary, the latest celebrations of the classic album are treats for the band's most devout fans that, for the audiophiles among us, will most certainly be snapped up.

TOYAH
LIVE AT DRURY LANE
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **May 12 *Cherry Red***
FORMATS: **CD+DVD, 2LP Pink Vinyl**

This month sees the release of the comprehensive edition of Toyah's momentous concert at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, recorded on 23/24 December 1981.

The band was invited by the BBC to play a special live show for BBC2's 'The Old Grey Whistle Test Christmas Special', with the show also airing on BBC Radio 1 and attracting an impressive 12 million television viewers.

It was later issued on VHS but the set has now been remastered for release on CD/DVD and Vinyl, containing all 13 songs as performed, with two tracks from the broadcast reinstated following their cut from the original video release.

Exclusive to the CD are three bonus audio tracks recorded live in Milan on the band's Winter Tour - *Stand Proud*, *Urban Tribesmen* and *Pop Star* - plus a previously-unreleased sound desk concert recording, courtesy of Joel Bogen.

Packaged with a 24-page colour booklet, including an introduction by Toyah and new sleeve notes by Craig Astley, along with brand new artwork including photography of Toyah's iconic stage entrance for the gig, it's another superb release that emphasises the group's impact on the music scene some four decades ago.

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | **REISSUES** | COMPILATIONS

DAFT PUNK
RANDOM ACCESS MEMORIES
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **May 12 *Sony***
FORMATS: **2CD, 3LP Black Vinyl**

Marking its 10th anniversary, the fourth and final album from French electronic duo Daft Punk is reissued as an expanded set.

The multi-Grammy-winning hit record - including *Get Lucky*, *Instant Crush*, and *Lose Yourself To Dance* - was originally released back in 2013 and became a global chart hit two decades after their formation.

Featuring an all-star line up of collaborators, including Pharell Willams, Nile Rodgers, Julien Casablancas, Paul Williams, Panda Bear and Todd Edwards, it carries through the essence of their classic recordings while updating their sound with a commercial edge for the modern market.

To celebrate its latest milestone, this special expanded edition includes 35 minutes of unreleased music, comprising demos and studio outtakes, that are exclusive to the 10th anniversary release.

Available on 2CD or 3LP Black Vinyl, the latter edition also includes a special *Lose Yourself To Dance* poster, for a true celebration of the final chapter in Daft Punk's legacy.

THE WATERBOYS
A ROCK IN THE WEARY LAND
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **May 26 *Cooking Vinyl***
FORMATS: **2CD, 2LP Blue Vinyl**

The seventh album from Mike Scott and co is expanded for a celebratory reissue, featuring an additional 12 previously unreleased tracks from the era.

Originally released in 2000, 'A Rock In The Weary Land' marked a turning point and saw the return of the band's name after two records attributed to the frontman, thanks in part to contributions from two original Waterboys: Kevin Wilkinson and Anthony Thistlethwaite.

Marking its first-ever reissue and the album's vinyl debut, the release includes the 14-song 2001 US edition, which added *Lucky Day / Bad Advice* and *My Lord, What A Morning* to the original UK tracklist, while the second disc boasts 12 previously unreleased tracks, chosen by Scott.

Additionally, there's a spectacular 16-minute live version of Waterboys' classic *Savage Earth Heart*, which occupies the entirety of side four on the vinyl release.

For this reissue, the artwork has been revisited to feature a different Steve Gullick photo from the original album cover sessions, while both vinyl and CD formats include many previously unseen shots.

Packaged with a 28-page booklet (CD) and gatefold sleeve (vinyl), it's a carefully curated reissue of a celebrated album in their catalogue that deserves another shot in the spotlight.

RIGHT SAID FRED
THE SINGLES
★★☆☆☆

RELEASED: **June 2 *Self-released***
FORMATS: **CD, 2LP Pink Vinyl**

Bringing together hits from throughout the years, Right Said Fred celebrate their chart legacy with a new singles collection.

Formed in 1989 by brothers Fred and Richard Fairbrass, the duo rose to prominence with their debut single *I'm Too Sexy*, which quickly became a global chart smash and hit No. 1 in the US.

It's not a coincidence they're releasing this collection now, with the track having been sampled by Drake (*Way Too Sexy*), Taylor Swift (*Look What You Made Me Do*), and most recently Beyoncé (*Alien Superstar*), with its appeal transcending generations.

Featuring follow-ups *Don't Talk Just Kiss* and *Deeply Dippy*, plus recordings from the past three decades, the expansive set clocks in at 20 songs that span their entire career.

Disappointingly, certain tracks appear in alternative versions, including the Top 40 hits *Those Simple Things* and *Bumped*, while their Top 5 Comic Relief hit *Stick It Out* isn't featured at all.

Having contributed to nine UK No. 1 hit records, Right Said Fred's pop credentials don't come into question, but for a singles collection such as this it's a shame that they couldn't get all of the tracks together for one comprehensive release.

RICK ASTLEY
HOLD ME IN YOUR ARMS
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **May 12 *BMG***
FORMATS: **2CD, Limited Edition Blue Vinyl**

Back with another 35th anniversary celebration, this time Rick Astley revisits his sophomore LP 'Hold Me In Your Arms'.

Released in 1988, the LP proved that his breakthrough success was no fluke and achieved numerous international Top 10 chart positions, peaking at No. 8 in the UK and going Top 20 Stateside.

Led by the self-penned *She Wants To Dance With Me*, Rick also reunites with Stock Aitken Waterman on follow-up *Take Me To Your Heart*, while its third single - the title song - once again written by Rick, gave the project another hit. Meanwhile, Rick's soulful take on The Temptations' classic *Ain't Too Proud To Beg* landed him another chart smash in the States.

Presented as a 2CD set along with a Limited Edition Blue Vinyl release, the expanded edition features a wealth of bonus material, including the B-side *I'll Be Fine*, Rick's reimagined solo takes on *She Wants To Dance With Me* and *Hold Me In Your Arms*, plus a vast array of remixes, extended mixes and instrumentals.

For an artist who is all too often boxed in by his biggest hits, this latest release shines a light on a classic record that holds up against its predecessor and proves Rick Astley was always far more than just that one song.

S CLUB 7
DON'T STOP MOVIN'
★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **May 5 *Universal***
FORMATS: **7" Black Vinyl + Art Card**

Ahead of the band's UK and Ireland tour in celebration of their 25th anniversary, the classic *Don't Stop Movin'* is available for the first time on wax.

Presented on 7" Black Vinyl, the release features the single along with its original B-side *Right Guy*, written by Cathy Dennis and S Clubber Bradley McIntosh.

Available exclusively via the band's website, it comes packaged with the original artwork and includes a double-sided print of the band from the era.

Last year, its parent album, the band's third LP 'Sunshine' (2001), was issued on vinyl for the first time and its success - which saw the limited release enter the Top 30 - appears to have encouraged the group to further explore the format.

It's a neat start to their latest era and, although bittersweet following the passing of founding member Paul Cattermole, a welcome reminder of a stellar catalogue that saw them become one of the most successful British pop institutions of the late-nineties and early-noughties.

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | **REISSUES** | COMPILATIONS

MIKE OLDFIELD
TUBULAR BELLS (50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION)
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **May 26 *Virgin***
FORMATS: **CD, 2LP Black Vinyl**

For its 50th anniversary, 'Tubular Bells' is revisited and remastered with a host of additional content that unites various elements of Mike Oldfield's classic recordings for the first time.

Released for the first time in 1973, the then-20-year-old's debut album - with virtually every instrument played by Mike himself - helped launch Virgin Records and quickly became a phenomenon, topping the UK charts and winning a Grammy.

The new release, marking five decades of the recording, contains a brand new half-speed Abbey Road master of the original album, plus a second album of bonus material that feeds into his creative vision.

Receiving its first outing on vinyl is *Tubular X,* which Mike recorded in 1998 for an 'X-Files' album, along with his remix collaboration with York, the original *Mike Oldfield's Single (Theme From Tubular Bells)*, and, for the first time since a very limited run in 2012, Mike's stunning *Tubular Bells/In Dulci Jubilo (Music for the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games)*.

Also included is the brand new, eight-minute track *Tubular Bells 4 Intro*, which may well be the last thing ever recorded by the retired musician.

It's a body of work that's often been revisited throughout the years, but in bringing together various aspects of the 'Tubular Bells' universe from the past 50 years, this anniversary set seems particularly noteworthy.

THE RAH BAND
CLOUDS ACROSS THE MOON – THE RAH BAND STORY VOL. 2
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **May 19 *Cherry Pop***
FORMATS: **5CD**

Returning with the second of two comprehensive 5CD box sets covering their complete recordings is The Rah Band.

Following the release of 'Messages From The Stars' last year, which encompassed the period from 1977 through 1984, the second edition continues with the act's output from 1985 up until 1998.

Included are expanded versions of the albums 'Mystery' (1985), 'Something About The Music' (2002 - originally due 1987), and the previously unreleased 'World Keeps Turning', plus 2CDs of additional 12" mixes, 7" mixes and remixes.

It was the 1977 hit *The Crunch* that saw Richard Hewson's project first gain chart momentum, and following a string of minor hits in the years since, he returned in '85 with *Clouds Across The Moon*, which hit No. 6 in the UK and went Top 10 across Europe.

That song is celebrated here along with lesser-known recordings that demonstrate Hewson's role as a sonic adventurer within his boundary-pushing approach to making music.

Clocking in at 75 songs - 58 tracks previously unreleased on CD and 29 previously unreleased on any format - the Box Set comes packaged with a fully illustrated 20-page booklet containing brand new sleevenotes by Lois Wilson.

Coinciding with The Rah Band's 45th anniversary, 'Clouds Across The Moon' is another fitting release to honour the musician who, decades later, has rarely slowed down and continues to record and release to this day.

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS

NOW YEARBOOK 1978

★★★★☆

RELEASED: **April 28 *Sony***

FORMATS: **4CD, Limited Edition 4CD, 3LP Translucent Pink Vinyl**

Stepping back in time 45 years is the latest instalment of NOW's Yearbook series, with a comprehensive 85-track deep dive into 1978.

It's a hit-packed tour through 12 months of music, with chart-toppers from Rod Stewart (*Da Ya Think I'm Sexy?*), ABBA (*Take A Chance On Me*), and Boney M (*Rivers Of Babylon*), covering all aspects of the musical landscape from pop and dance floor fillers, to punk and reggae.

There are divas aplenty, with Chaka Khan's *I'm Every Woman* and Donna Summer's *Macarthur Park* among the highlights, alongside early Kate Bush track *The Man With The Child In His Eyes*, which closes out the first disc.

The Boomtown Rats, Blondie and Siouxsie And The Banshees are among the heavy-hitters on a second disc of artists rooted in punk around the burgeoning EnhancedWave movement, while the third CD is a disco celebration, boasting gems like Chic's *Le Freak*, Sheila and B Devotion's Singin' In The Rain, and The Three Degrees' *Givin' Up Givin' In*.

It's back to pop as the collection comes to a close, with two huge hits from the soundtrack to 'Grease' from Olivia Newton-John and John Travolta, Brotherhood Of Man's chart-topping *Figaro*, and the year's UK Eurovision entry from Co-co among the tracks on offer.

Available on CD and 3LP Translucent Pink Vinyl, along with a special edition 'hard-back' package with a 28-page booklet featuring a summary of the year, a track-by-track guide, a quiz, and original singles artwork, it's another strong showing from the much-loved series.

NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL EUROVISION SONG CONTEST

★★★★★

RELEASED: **April 28 Sony**

FORMATS: **4CD, 2LP Blue and Red Vinyl, Limited Edition 5LP Clear Vinyl Box Set**

As Eurovision returns to the United Kingdom for the first time in 25 years, NOW Music is revisiting seven decades of hits with a bumper celebration of the Contest.

Clocking in at 84 tracks, the set launches with ABBA's iconic winner *Waterloo* and segues into two of the UK's biggest successes: Bucks Fizz's *Making Your Mind Up* and Brotherhood Of Man's *Save Your Kisses For Me*.

Winners run seamlessly into fan-favourite entries from throughout the years, with an impressive run of Gina G, Dana International and Charlotte Perrelli an early highlight.

Alongside past success stories there are also modern classics, including 2023 returning entrant Loreen with *Euphoria* and Sam Ryder's *Spaceman*, plus recent winning tunes from Måneskin and Kalush Orchestra.

A reminder of the weight of Eurovision, icons such as Celine Dion, Cliff Richard and Johnny Logan feature - and there's a celebration of Ireland's nineties success with the triple-punch of Linda Martin, Niamh Kavanagh, and Paul Harrington & Charlie McGettigan.

Rounding out this Eurovision time capsule is *Refrain* from Lys Assia - the first ever winner from 1956 - without which there wouldn't be the global phenomenon as we know it today.

Available across formats - including a stunning 5LP Clear Vinyl Box Set - it's a standout celebration of Eurovision past that paves the way for a fresh generation of talent to grace the biggest stage in music.

EUROVISION SONG CONTEST LIVERPOOL 2023

★★★★★

RELEASED: **April 28 *UMC***

FORMATS: **2CD, 3LP Black Vinyl**

Collecting the 37 entries from the 2023 Eurovision Song Contest, the official companion album is a comprehensive celebration of what this year's show has to offer.

Embodying the 'United By Music' theme of the 67th edition of the Contest, the record showcases the spectrum of styles set to take to the stage in a bid to be crowned Eurovision's next winner.

Last year, it was Ukraine's Kalush Orchestra who launched to victory with their folk-rap track *Stefania*, and while previous entries like Sam Ryder's second-place *Spaceman* seem to have influenced a rockier sound in some countries' offerings, there's plenty more besides.

Electro pop gems sit alongside dance floor stormers and soaring ballads that together represent everything a strong Eurovision line-up should be.

Available as a 2CD package as well as a limited edition 3LP Vinyl set, it's a time capsule of future ESC classics that will no doubt characterise chart trends over the coming months after being played on Europe's biggest pop platform.

In recent years, the Contest has made global stars of artists like Måneskin and Sam Ryder, and for Eurovision fans worldwide this is another essential slice of pop history and a celebration of what's sure to be a classic night in Liverpool.

RELEASE RADAR

Coming soon...

NEW MUSIC

JAKE SHEARS

LAST MAN DANCING

RELEASED: **June 2 *Mute***

FORMATS: **Standard CD, Alternate Artwork Deluxe CD (Artist Store Exclusive), Standard Clear Vinyl, Limited Edition Orange Marble Vinyl (Indies Exclusive), Limited Edition Clear Cassette (Artist Store Exclusive)**

The Scissor Sisters star returns to the dance floor with his feelgood second solo album.

LOUISE

GREATEST HITS

RELEASED: **June 2 *BMG***

Formats: CD, 2CD, Limited Edition 2LP Violet Vinyl, Blackberry Purple Cassette

Celebrating 30 years of hits with Eternal and as a solo artist, Louise looks back with her latest 'Greatest Hits' LP.

NOEL GALLAGHER'S HIGH FLYING BIRDS

COUNCIL SKIES

RELEASED: **June 2 *Sour Mash***

FORMATS: **CD, Deluxe 2CD, Standard Black Vinyl + 7" Single, Limited Edition Blue Vinyl (Amazon Exclusive), Deluxe Triple Vinyl (Artist Store Exclusive), Limited Edition Picture Disc Vinyl (Artist Store Exclusive)**

Returning with his fifth High Flying Birds album, 'Council Skies' is Noel's tribute to the Manchester estate where he was raised and marks his first original LP in five years.

SOPHIE ELLIS-BEXTOR

HANA

RELEASED: **June 2 Cooking Vinyl**

FORMATS: **CD, Standard Ice Blue Vinyl, Limited Edition Pastel Pink Vinyl (Artist Store Exclusive), Limited Edition Pink/Sage Green Cassette (Artist Store Exclusive)**

The seventh album from the 'Kitchen Disco' superstar is her third collaboration with Ed Harcourt, who describes its sound as "kaleidoscopic joy".

NIALL HORAN

THE SHOW

RELEASED: **June 9 Capitol**

FORMATS: **CD, Standard Black Vinyl, Limited Edition Alternate Artwork White Vinyl (Indies Exclusive), Limited Edition Alternate Artwork Light Blue Vinyl (HMV Exclusive), Collector's Edition Window Box Set (Artist Store Exclusive)**

The former One Direction star puts on a show with the follow-up to his chart-topping sophomore LP.

RUFUS WAINWRIGHT

FOLKOCRACY

RELEASED: **June 2 *BMG***

FORMATS: **CD, 2LP Black Vinyl**

A star-studded album of folk music reinventions featuring Brandi Carlile, John Legend, David Byrne, Sheryl Crow, Nicole Scherzinger, Chaka Khan, and others.

THE ACES

I'VE LOVED YOU FOR SO LONG

RELEASED: **June 2 *Red Bull***

FORMATS: **CD, Standard Black Vinyl, Limited Edition Purple Vinyl (Artist Store Exclusive), Limited Edition Green Vinyl (Retail Exclusive)**

Returning with their third album, the indie pop girl group delivers their most honest and raw material for what's billed as the band's most authentic work yet.

CHRISTINE AND THE QUEENS

PARANOÏA, ANGELS, TRUE LOVE

RELEASED: **June 9 *Because***

FORMATS: **3CD, 3LP Black Vinyl**

Clocking in at 20 tracks across three discs, with guest appearances from Madonna & 070 Shake, the new record is set to be the French star's most accomplished release yet.

MCFLY

POWER TO PLAY

RELEASED: **June 9 *BMG***

FORMATS: **CD, Limited Edition Individual Member CDs (Artist Store Exclusive), Limited Edition Yellow Vinyl, Limited Edition Cassette**

The pop rock boy band return to their roots with their guitar-heavy seventh album, billed as their "biggest, boldest and most brilliantly noisy statement yet".

KELLY CLARKSON

CHEMISTRY

RELEASED: **June 23 *Atlantic***

FORMATS: **CD, Standard Teal Vinyl, Limited Edition Two Tone Vinyl (Spotify Exclusive)**

The original 'American Idol' returns with a powerful statement reflecting on her 2020 divorce and her journey back to happiness.

DEXYS

THE FEMININE DIVINE

RELEASED: **July 28 *100%***

FORMATS: **CD, Limited Edition 'First Edition' CD (Artist Store Exclusive), Standard Black Vinyl, Limited Edition Orange Vinyl (Artist Store Exclusive), Limited Edition Purple Vinyl (Retail Exclusive), Limited Edition Cassette**

Kevin Rowland and co return with their fifth studio album and first original collection in over a decade.

GEORGIA

EUPHORIC

RELEASED: **July 28 *Domino***

FORMATS: **CD, Standard Black Vinyl, Limited Edition Purple Vinyl (Retail Exclusive), Limited Edition Cassette**

The singer's follow-up to 2020's 'Seeking Thrills' sees her join forces with producer Rostam in a bid to surrender "to my issues, to my past, to my flaws and to the healing process".

LOOKING BACK

PRINCE
THE GOLD EXPERIENCE; THE TRUTH

RELEASED: **June 9 *Sony***

FORMATS: **Standard Black Vinyl**

Following limited-edition Record Store Day releases, two of the late superstar's nineties albums will finally be made readily available on wax.

SAVAGE GARDEN
SELF-TITLED

RELEASED: **June 9 *Sony***

FORMATS: **2LP White Vinyl**

Featuring the singles *Truly Madly Deeply*, *I Want You* and *To The Moon and Back*, the debut album from Darren Hayes and Daniel Jones finally arrives on vinyl.

DANNII MINOGUE
NEON NIGHTS 20

RELEASED: **June 16 *London***

FORMATS: **CD/DVD, 7CD Box Set, Limited Edition Picture Disc Vinyl, Limited Edition Cassette**

The classic fourth album from the Queen of the Clubs marks two decades with a massive celebratory reissue.

APPLETON
EVERYTHING'S EVENTUAL

RELEASED: **June 16 *Demon***

FORMATS: **Limited Edition White Vinyl, Limited Edition Purple Vinyl (HMV Exclusive)**

The All Saints stars' first and only album as a duo is released on vinyl for the first time in celebration of its 20th anniversary.

PET SHOP BOYS
SMASH – THE SINGLES 1985 – 2020

RELEASED: **June 16 *Parlophone***

FORMATS: **3CD, 3CD/2Blu-Ray, 6LP Black Vinyl, Limited Edition 6LP White Vinyl (Artist Store Exclusive), Triple Cassette (Artist Store Exclusive)**

Spanning their entire discography, Pet Shop Boys celebrate 35+ years of hits on their most cohesive best-of collection yet.

TOYAH
SHEEP FARMING IN BARNET

RELEASED: **June 16 *Cherry Red***

FORMATS: **1LP Black Vinyl**

The debut album from Toyah is reissued on standard vinyl on the back of a sell-out limited coloured edition.

SHEENA EASTON
YOU COULD HAVE BEEN WITH ME

RELEASED: **June 23 *Cherry Pop***

FORMATS: **Limited Edition Blue Vinyl**

Remastered from the original master tapes, the latest release from Sheena's catalogue is the first-ever vinyl repress of her 1981 hit sophomore album.

THE WEATHER GIRLS & MARTHA WASH
CARRY ON: THE DELUXE EDITION 1982-1992

RELEASED: **June 23 *Cherry Pop***

FORMATS: **4CD Box Set**

Spanning all three of the duo's Columbia albums plus Martha's hugely successful solo debut, the set includes a massive 22 bonus tracks.

HOWARD JONES
HOWARD JONES SINGS "WHAT IS LOVE?"

RELEASED: **June 30 *Cherry Red***

FORMATS: **Limited Edition Blue Vinyl**

Only made available in 1984 as a very limited- edition promotional vinyl LP in Japan, Howard Jones' much sought after collection finally gets a wide release.

SUEDE
SUEDE 30

RELEASED: **July 7 *Demon***

FORMATS: **2CD, Standard Black Vinyl, Limited Edition Picture Disc, Limited Edition 7" Single Picture Discs, Limited Edition Blu-Ray (SDE Exclusive)**

Celebrating its 30th anniversary, the group's debut album is remastered and expanded across formats.

LONDON BOYS
THE TWELVE COMMANDMENTS OF DANCE

RELEASED: **August (TBC) *Maschina***

FORMATS: **Limited Edition Coloured Vinyl (Magenta, Orange, Purple)**

The debut album from the dance pop duo is finally reissued on vinyl with a series of vibrant pressings.

For all the latest RETROPOP releases visit RETROPOP MAGAZINE.COM

CAUGHT live

THE FIZZ - ANOTHER NIGHT AT INDIGO AT THE O2, LONDON
MARCH 31, 2023
★★★★★

For a moment it seemed like The Fizz's 40th anniversary gig wasn't to be, but the group finally made it on stage - two years later - to deliver one of the best concerts of their decades-spanning career.

Packing out the 2,800-capacity indigo at The O2, the trio - starring Cheryl Baker, Mike Nolan and Jay Aston - powered through a stellar, 35-song set, delivering all of their biggest hits and plenty more during the two-hour spectacle.

Opening track *Are You Ready* - from their 1982 album of the same name - set the tone for a show heavy with hidden gems, segueing into fan-favourites *I'd Like To Say I Love You* and *Another Night*, and their first post-Eurovision offering, *Piece of the Action*.

Featuring tracks from the original Bucks Fizz album series - 'Bucks Fizz' (1981), 'Are You Ready' (1982), 'Hand Cut' (1983), 'I Hear Talk' (1984) and 'Writing's On The Wall' (1986) - the group delivered all of their biggest hits, with setlist staples like *If You Can't Stand The Heat*, *Run For Your Life* and *New Beginning (Mamba Seyra)* sequenced alongside lesser-performed singles *I Hear Talk*, *You And Your Heart So Blue* and *Magical*, shining a light on some of the band's overlooked gems.

Meanwhile, offerings from their more recent LPs 'The F-Z of Pop' (2017), 'Smoke and Mirrors' (2020) and 'Everything Under The Sun' (2022) - like comeback single *Dancing In The Rain*, the poignant Jay solo *From Here To Eternity* (dedicated to daughter Josie) and Cheryl-led *Amen* - proved real crowd-pleasers and a testament to the band's enduring appeal.

The latter track was written by Cheryl's daughter, who featured on backing vocals alongside twin sister Natalie and dad Steve on bass - and they weren't the only familiar faces in the house. In an extended list of thank yous towards the end of the show, the band revealed Nicola Martin - who formed Bucks Fizz more than four decades ago - was in the crowd, with talk that original writer Andy Hill was also present.

Both together and individually, they worked on several Bucks Fizz tracks, with album cuts including *I Do It All For You*, *Midnight Reservation*, *20th Century Hero*, and even B-side *Invisible*, all featuring in the show in a series of medleys, which allowed each member their moment to shine.

Harking back to their first 'Greatest Hits' (1983) album, Cheryl delivered a powerhouse mash-up of *Oh Suzanne* and *Rules of the Game*, while Jay brought the drama on *When We Were Young* and international single *Easy Love*. Meanwhile, Mike's showstopping, stripped-back delivery of Top 10 hit *Now Those Days Are Gone* - backed by the girls' on-point harmonies - proved one of several standout moments.

Closing with the double-punch of No. 1 singles *The Land of Make Believe* and *Making Your Mind Up*, The Fizz's big night was everything a 40th anniversary show should be: wall-to-wall classics, nostalgic visuals and aptly-sequined costumes, delivered by three of British pop's true survivors.

Best captured in *Treasure Forever* - the only song in the set from the band's latest album - with the mantra *'We stand, we fall as one / Proud to say we faced it together'*, the love that radiated for Cheryl, Mike and Jay around the venue was overwhelming. And with hints towards more new music, it seems there's plenty more for Fizz fans to look forward to yet... **RP**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

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